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POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE;

OR,

LETTERS

TO

A COUNTRY GENTLEMAN,

RETIRED FROM PARLIAMENT:

ON THE SUBJECT

OF SOME OF THE

LEADING CHARACTERS AND EVENTS

OF THE PRESENT DAY.

LONDON:

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE writer of the enſuing Letters feels it his duty to apologize to the public for any appearance of egotiſm, into which he fears the neceſſity, ariſing from the nature of epiſtolary correſpondence, of expreſſing himſelf in the firſt perſon, may have unfortunately betrayed him. He is the more inclined to do this, becauſe aware how peculiarly offenſive egotiſm is to others, and conſcious that few men are leſs juſtified in the indulgence of ſuch a weakneſs than himſelf.

Much of what has been written on the affairs of France, was committed to paper on the occurrence of the firſt Revolution. The ſecond Revolution, and the ſubſequent events which took place in that country, called for additional remarks. Theſe unexpected changes may have produced ſome ſeeming inconſiſtency in the judgment which the writer at different times ventured to pronounce upon the ſubject. But no man, on ſimilar occaſions, can do otherwiſe than form ſuch a judgment as exiſting circumſtances appear to juſtify; and this is all that the writer has attempted. If, however, he has been guilty of ſeeming inconſiſtency in his *judgment on facts*, which have varied their appearances with a celerity that has exceeded belief, and baffled all conjecture, it is ſome ſatisfaction to reflect, he has been guilty of no inconſiſtency with regard to *general*

les

principles. Whatever may be ſaid of his ſtyle of compoſition, which he fears deſerves the charge of being too often feeble and diffuſe; and whatever may be objected as to the propriety of many of the topicks ſelected for ſpeculation, ſeveral of which, however they might have been the objects of curioſity at the moment when they employed his pen, are now gone by; he feels himſelf under no neceſſity to vindicate the *tendency* of his work, which, he truſts, invariably breathes a free and honeſt ſpirit, and a ſincere attachment to the ſentiments of public and private Virtue.

July 30, 1793.

CONTENTS.

LETTER I.

Duty of a Member of Parliament—Syſtematic parties, for the conduct of government, unneceſſary—Remark of Lord Orrery confirmed by experience—Advantages of political integrity illuſtrated—Corruption of the vehicles of public intelligence, by parliamentary Parties deplored. Page 1

LETTER II.

Preſent ſtate of Eloquence in this country—Rapid review of the merits and public character of our beſt parliamentary Orators: Mr. PITT, Mr. DUNDAS, &c. Mr. FOX, Mr. SHERIDAN, Mr. WYNDHAM, Mr. GREY. *Lords* THURLOW, STORMONT, LOUGHBOROUGH, STANHOPE, and LANDSDOWN. *Diſcuſſion concerning* Mr. HORNE TOOKE. Page 14

LETTER III.

Reaſons for having omitted to mention Mr. BURKE—*Importance in a political and philoſophical light, of the* FRENCH REVOLUTION—*Of the different principles that are conſidered as the baſis of Civil Authority—Brief Hiſtory of the* REVOLUTION *in* FRANCE, *to the formation of the Conſtitution and its ſanction by the King.* - - - - - - Page 40

LETTER

CONTENTS.

LETTER IV.

Exultation at the triumph of Liberty in France—View of Edmund Burke's conduct—Remarks on the chief of his objections—A ſpeculative Atheiſt may be a man of pure morals—On the literary defenders of the French Revolution—Moral beauties of the New Conſtitution—Reflections on the events of the tenth of Auguſt, National Convention, &c. Page 68

LETTER V.

Inadequacy of the National Repreſentation, admitted by the firſt characters in Parliament—Duty of a Reform lies wholly with the People—General ſuggeſtions on the ſubject—Remarks on ſome of the opinions of Junius. Page 120

LETTER VI.

Revolutioniſts defended as to their abſtract principles—Why dangerous—Our preſent mixed form of government adapted to the national character—All our parliamentary abuſes owing to the want of a ſyſtematic corrective—What that ſhould be, proved from the analogous caſe of other Corporations---Plan of a permanent conſtitutional check, &c. &c. Page 148

ERRATA.

Page.	Line.	
1	3	for *Orerry*, read *Orrery*.
3	18	for *probation*, read *approbation*.
20	2	for *coined by the cunning*, read *coined by cunning*.
27	7	for *has*, read *have*.
116	4	for *our political*, &c. read *our own political*, &c.
140	8	for *evil*, read *vice*.
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POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE, &c.

LETTER I.

Duty of a Member of Parliament—Syſtematic Parties, for the Conduct of Government, unneceſſary—Remark of Lord Orrery confirmed by Experience—Advantages of political Integrity illuſtrated—Corruption of the Vehicles of public Intelligence, by parliamentary Parties, deplored.

SIR,

AFTER having dedicated many of your earlier years to Parliamentary purſuits, and quitted the anxious toils of public life, for the mild ſcenes of rural retirement and the peaceful enjoyment of domeſtic comfort, it is natural that the rage for political diſcuſſions which now prevails throughout the Kingdom, and has reached even your reſidence, ſhould have awakened your curioſity, and induced you to wiſh to learn the ſentiments of a friend, who, however inconſiderable in himſelf, lives in the buſtle of the town, relative to ſuch events as more immediately paſs before his eyes, and at

preſent ſo warmly engage the public attention. Honouring the integrity of thoſe individuals, who, during their parliamentary career have been diſtinguiſhed by the independent character of *Country Gentlemen*, I haſten to gratify your wiſhes with a degree of pleaſure ſo much the greater, as it ariſes, perhaps, not more from friendſhip, than from vanity: for, in theſe caſes, we ſuffer ourſelves to be captivated by a very pardonable ſelf-deluſion, and are raiſed in imagination to the level of thoſe with whom we are engaged in familiar intercourſe, and whom we are in the habit of reſpecting for their abilities or virtue. To reject, in his political capacity, the influence of any party; to allow no hopes of emoluments or honours to wean him from the path of rectitude; to ſpeak and to vote only according to the dictates of conſcience and conviction; is the duty of every individual who is worthy to be ranked among the legiſlators of his country. But when acts of Duty are generally neglected, the few inſtances which occur of their performance render them acts of Virtue; and that conduct which would, otherwiſe, have ſimply excited our approbation, becomes highly meritorious and honourable.

I am well aware that, in the opinion of ſome men—and thoſe men of great authority and experience—the independent conduct which I have

have conſidered as requiſite and praiſe-worthy in a Member of Parliament, is, in reality, neither neceſſary nor meritorious. They inſiſt, that a Miniſter ought to have a ſtrong party to ſupport his meaſures and give ſtability to his Adminiſtration; and that the exceſs and tyranny to which he may be carried by the temptations and authority of his office, demand a counter-party to watch his proceedings, correct his errors, and reſiſt his principles, by an active and vigorous Oppoſition, whenever thoſe principles ſeem repugnant to the nature of the government of the country, or the ſafety, freedom, and happineſs of the ſubject. Hence, they infer, that every man performs his duty, as a Member of the Legiſlative Aſſembly, by regularly lending his aid to that party whoſe general conduct obtains the greateſt ſhare of his probation. To me, however, this doctrine appears as lax, in point of reaſoning, as it evidently is, in point of morals: for however juſtly we admit the nature of our Conſtitution to require the exiſtence of two adverſe parties, it by no means follows that a man ought to become a Member of one of thoſe parties by a ſacrifice of independence, unleſs it be proved that thoſe parties cannot be reared on a purer and more honourable baſis. That, on the one hand, the Miniſter of the day needs, for the ſupport of his power, a ſtrong Party, and that manly reſiſtance ſhould be made, on the other, to every meaſure of Adminiſtration which augurs ill to

the national welfare, no individual, converſant with the nature of the Britiſh Conſtitution, will venture to deny; but I never can admit, that, in any well-conſtituted government, the corruption of individual integrity is neceſſary for the ſecurity of general happineſs: and who can be ſaid to preſerve his integrity, when he ſubmits his conduct to the guidance of this or that ſet of men, rather than to the direction of his own reaſon and conſcience? Every man who enjoys a ſeat in Parliament, is bound to aid and to maintain the Adminiſtration then in power, ſo long as he really believes that Adminiſtration to act with juſtice, with honour, and with patriotiſm; for he has no right, except upon conſciencious grounds, to oppoſe, impede, and perplex the meaſures of the Government of his country: but while he conſiders Adminiſtration as acting upon intolerant or inequitable principles, he is ungracious and criminal indeed, if he does not evince the moſt dauntleſs and determined Oppoſition. Should his ſupport be rewarded by any of the emoluments and honours of office, it were abſurd to reject the meed of virtue, and the means of more effectually contributing to the public ſervice: but his own dignity of mind, and ſenſe of duty to his Conſtituents, require of him that he reſign all ſuch favours, when they become the price of compliance with diſgraceful requiſitions, and that he freely oppoſe Miniſters, when his feelings

aſſure

aſſure him that their miſconduct has rendered them unworthy of his ſupport. Were Members of the Britiſh Legiſlature to reflect on the ſole purpoſe for which they can rationally be ſuppoſed to enjoy ſeats in Parliament, they would act in obedience to that end, and approve or condemn meaſures only as they appeared to them to confirm the peace, freedom, and proſperity, of this country. Of ſuch principles what could prove the reſult, but that a MINISTER would always be ſupported by an effective party, ſo long as he deſerved it, conſiſting of thoſe who felt it incumbent on them, as honeſt men, to aid every adminiſtration of their country, unleſs they ſaw very juſt grounds of objection, and of thoſe who honourably held the firſt Offices of the State? and that, from the variety of lights in which different men ſee different things, an OPPOSITION would ſtill exiſt; but that its force, activity, and effect, would ariſe out of the exigency of the caſe, and be determined by the ſuſpicious appearance or obvious wickedneſs of the meaſures by which it was increaſed and invigorated? On theſe grounds, the meaſures of Adminiſtration would be pure and patriotic, and the animated exertions of Oppoſition, by being rare, would prove the more dreaded and the more effectual. But how are matters ſituated at this moment? We have an Adminiſtration, upheld, not by honourable aid, but by the groſſeſt corruption,

and

and an Oppoſition, not ariſing from particular exigence, and acting merely from principle, but evidently founded on a ſettled plan of ſyſtematical reſiſtance. Abuſes like theſe, proceed from the total careleſſneſs of Members, in general, to the duties of their ſituation, and their diſregard, if not contempt and ſcorn, of the public welfare. All men, who become the component parts of a Legiſlative Aſſembly, are placed in a ſtation of life, which, more than any other, calls for the utmoſt purity of intention and of conduct. There appears, it muſt be confeſſed, an imbecility in the human character, which makes us naturally ſubmit our minds to the direction of a man of intrepidity and genius, who leaps forward into public life, and cries out to the crowd, who gaze upon him with aſtoniſhment, "I am your leader: Purſue my ſteps, and be happy!" But it is no leſs inexcuſeable for a Member of Parliament to yield implicitly to the guidance of any perſon, under an idea of his poſſeſſing more abilities, and knowledge, and power of determining on what is juſt, than himſelf, than it is for him to ſuffer his own integrity to be gradually ſubdued, in conſequence of an habitual obſervation of the degeneracy of others. The ſuggeſtions of every man's mind, are ſufficient to diſtinguiſh betwixt right and wrong; and, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, to point out to him the elements of moral action: for the principles

ciples of public, as of private, virtue, are few, and ſimple, and obvious to the meaneſt capacity. But theſe principles muſt be often abandoned by ſuch as form party attachments. Lord Orrery, when ſtating to his ſon the neceſſity of an Engliſhman's being well verſed in politics, ſays, "He muſt chooſe his own party, and he muſt ſtick to the choice; *Non revocare gradum*, muſt be his motto; and Heaven forgive you, my dear ſon, if the *gradus*, now and then, enforces you to act againſt ſelf-conviction!" * The frequency of this evil, indeed, every Seſſion of Parliament ſufficiently evinces; when an hundred inſtances repeatedly occur, on both ſides, and afford ſo many melancholy proofs that Members, who, in their political capacity, would ſerve their friends, muſt betray the public; and that the cauſe of their Party can be aided only by acting in oppoſition to the intereſt of their Country.

There are, it muſt be confeſſed, two motives which carry to the minds of men very powerful juſtifications for ſubmitting their parliamentary conduct to the direction of others. One is, the hope of filling the firſt Offices of the State, for the purpoſe of becoming objects of greater importance in the public eſtimation: The other, an idea of propoſing uſeful meaſures with

* Orrery on Swift. Letter xvii.

effect

effect, by the aſſent and aſſiſtance of the party they ſupport. With regard, however, to the latter of theſe motives, it may be obſerved, that the very circumſtance of being a party-man, is ſufficient to raiſe adverſaries to the propoſer of the moſt ſerviceable plan that can poſſibly be offered, and that no individual is ſo likely to carry his point, as he who is known to be actuated ſolely by principles of private integrity and public juſtice. Nor is the former motive leſs erroneous than the latter. Integrity and talents, in this country, will always be ſufficient to obtain that high eſtimation, which a gentleman of honeſt pride, and conſcious merit, would wiſh to acquire; an eſtimation ſuperior to any that can ariſe from hereditary claims, or the dignity of office; and where integrity or talents are wanting, the greateſt honours ſerve only to render native inſignificance the more conſpicuous, and vice more glaring. Look to the moſt eminent Stateſmen of this country, and aſk your own mind, whether their character has dignified their rank, or their rank alone given luſtre to their character? And whether ſuch a man, for example, as Mr. Fox, would not carry his own fame along with him in whatever ſituation he might be placed, or whether he could derive increaſe of ſplendour, from the mere adventitious circumſtance of being Miniſter of this country? No, Sir; truſt me, that *talents* alone will always fix a man in that high

high rank of ſociety, which great minds feel to be their natural deſtination; but that *talents* united with *integrity*, though the union, too frequently, deprive the poſſeſſor of the gaudy favours of Miniſterial patronage, will attract ſentiments in the public mind, infinitely more honourable than any which could poſſibly be produced by the higheſt artificial diſtinctions. Indeed, that thoſe who even want the qualifications neceſſary to procure eminence to party men, are yet, by the aid of acknowledged purity of intentions, rendered objects of great importance, is evident, from the example of Mr. Huſſey and Mr. Drake. The firſt of theſe gentlemen, without any brilliant endowments of nature, or extenſive acquiſition of political knowledge, and gifted only with plain common ſenſe, recommended by no very prepoſſeſſing ſtyle of delivery, enforces as much attention, on every important point, as the Miniſter himſelf, or the leader of the Oppoſition; and I have known his wiſh, for the poſtponement of particular parliamentary proceedings, aſſented to by Mr. Pitt, though adverſe to his original intention, at a time when ſome of the moſt conſpicuous characters, on the Oppoſition bench, had, in vain, exerted their great abilities to prove the neceſſity of ſuch a meaſure. Mr. Drake, jun. likewiſe, though a perfect gentleman and polite ſcholar, exhibits in his ſpeeches a whimſical eccentricity of ideas, and an unnatural combination

of good ſenſe with abſurd imagery, that might, perhaps, rather injure, than aid, the cauſe of a *party*; yet never does Mr. Drake riſe, to deliver his opinion, but the whole houſe manifeſts the moſt perfect ſilence. While ſuch deference is paid to mere intentions admitted to be honeſt, and to conduct evidently directed by no other principle than that of juſtice, what man, deceived neither by the ſuggeſtions of others, nor by a perverſe and crooked judgment of his own, would not infinitely prefer this honourable tribute of public reſpect, to all the pompous, but empty, diſtinctions of rank and title? Or what man, who felt and acted as a legiſlator ought, if ſuch marks of eſteem were even totally with-held, would not infinitely prefer the calm teſtimony of his own conſcience, to the higheſt honours of the State, or the loudeſt thunders of popular applauſe? Such conduct alone can confer true dignity on the character of a Member of Parliament, and ſecure to his declining years, and laſt moments of life, the moſt exalted of all bleſſings—a Mind fraught with ſatisfaction;—a Memory that brings with it no other feelings, than thoſe of cheerfulneſs and peace.

But it is idle, my dear Sir, to continue this long, and, I fear, tedious eulogium on the performance of duties, which You never neglected, when in a ſituation to fulfil them, and of which,

no man, at this moment, can more amply enjoy and eſtimate the pleaſing reward. I ſhall, therefore, haſten to a concluſion of this Letter, and proceed with pleaſure, in my next, to ſatisfy your queries with regard to the prominent characters and circumſtances of the preſent day; ſubjects on which, in your retired ſituation, you can reap no other intelligence than ſuch as the Newspapers, that you order to be remitted you from London, can afford. But Newspapers, as to political ſpeculation, muſt not always be truſted, as *moſt* of them are, in this reſpect, notoriouſly corrupted:—a painful reflection to thoſe who conſider the great public utility of theſe diurnal publications, when conducted on proper principles! The office of a Newspaper Editor is extremely important; and, if univerſally ſuſtained as it ought to be, would rank high indeed in point of reſpectability: for the Editor of a daily Print may be juſtly conſidered as the great director of public opinion and public judgment. It, therefore, becomes him never, intentionally, to miſlead thoſe who thus repoſe in him their generous confidence. To relate domeſtic and foreign occurrences, or to gratify the world by a daily publication of ingenious literary compoſitions, is the leaſt part of his duty. As, on the one hand, he ought to diſdain contaminating his columns with perſonal detraction, ſo ought he, on the other, to feel that he is the guardian of

the people's rights, and, reſiſting or upholding the meaſures of legiſlators and ſtateſmen, according to his ſenſe of their rectitude or danger, to ſuffer his paper, on political ſubjects, to be influenced only by the ſtricteſt *truth* and *impartiality*. Thus would he render himſelf a check on the occaſional injuſtice of both parties, and a benefit to mankind. The extenſive circulation, indeed, of a daily Print, affords the moſt effectual means of diſſeminating juſt principles and a right view of things; and, ſurely, when the power of performing a public good is great, the greater is the criminality of its perverſion.

Excuſe me for thus dwelling on the ſubject of Newspaper publications. It is natural that I ſhould do ſo, when they were once incidentally mentioned, becauſe I think their univerſal circulation renders them objects of great public importance, and becauſe I ſincerely wiſh well to ſuch an engine of univerſal knowledge; and it is ſtill more natural that I ſhould feel concern at the proſtitution and miſconduct of many of them —for I admit the exiſtence of ſome few exceptions—becauſe I fear that the legiſlature may at laſt take advantage of theſe errors, produced by their own corruption, to ſtab the liberty of the Preſs, through the ſides of Newspaper publication. And whenever this ſhall be attempted, by the aid of additional checks and impediments

impediments on the direction and ſale of theſe uſeful vehicles of diurnal intelligence ;—whenever the means of ſo conſtant a watch on the meaſures of bad Miniſters, are thought proper to be ſilenced by Parliamentary ſhackles ;—we may, from that moment, date the period of our civil bondage, and juſtly conſider the ſtab, thus given to the Freedom of the Preſs, as a mortal ſtab to the Liberties of this Country !

I remain, dear Sir, &c.

POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE, &c.

LETTER II.

Preſent State of Eloquence in this Country—Rapid Review of the merits and public character of our beſt Parliamentary Orators: *Mr.* PITT, *Mr.* DUNDAS, *Mr.* BURKE, *&c.* *Mr.* FOX, *Mr.* SHERIDAN, *Mr.* WYNDHAM, *Mr.* GREY—*Lords* THURLOW, STORMONT, LOUGHBOROUGH, STANHOPE, *and* LANSDOWNE—*Digreſſion concerning Mr.* HORNE TOOKE.

SIR,

ELOQUENCE, the peculiar product of a free State, is, perhaps, at the preſent time, more carefully and more generally cultivated in this country, than at any former period. In point of oratorical excellence, indeed, the modern annals of Great-Britain may juſtly vie with the moſt celebrated æras of Grecian or Roman Hiſtory. If Athens could, at one time, boaſt her DEMOSTHENES, we have no leſs reaſon to glory in our Fox; and if Rome could, at another, derive

derive ſplendour from the abilities of her CICERO, we may proudly produce his equal, for animated rhetoric, in the ſon of the illuſtrious CHATHAM. That two men, ſo eminent in their reſpective ranks of parliamentary eloquence, ſhould flouriſh at the ſame period, and in the ſame country, is a circumſtance not to be expected in the common courſe of human events; but when it is added, that our Senate likewiſe produces other characters, who riſe, in different lines of oratory, to great beauty and perfection, we may, indeed, conſider ourſelves as living in an age when Nature has been highly liberal of her choiceſt gifts, and Art more than uſually ſucceſsful in her beſt attainments.

In the looſe, rambling ſtyle of letter-writing, it is of little conſequence, dear Sir, whom I adduce as the firſt example, in proof of this aſſertion. But, as the Miniſter may be deemed, politically ſpeaking, the firſt man in this country, and as you had retired from public life before the preſent Premier entered into it, it were, perhaps, moſt regular and ſatisfactory to begin with a delineation of the ſtyle and manner, in which I ſhall not totally overlook the perſon and political character, of Mr. PITT. Imagine to yourſelf, then, Sir, a tall and rather ungraceful figure, with a boyiſh [illegible] face, that derives its chief expreſſion from an auſtere and thoughtful brow. If perſonal

perſonal appearance were the ſole title to public recommendation, ſuch an individual would, perhaps, have no very powerful plea in his favour; but, in this country, it is by more intrinſic and valuable qualities, it is by ſpirit and talents only, that men can expect to acquire an honourable rank, or a diſtinguiſhed character. Without ſuch qualities, indeed, Mr. Pitt, very unequally aided by his friends, had, long ſince, been overpowered by the acknowledged abilities of his political adverſaries. But he ſaw, betimes, where THEIR *forte*, in ſpeaking, lay, and aſſiduouſly cultivated that ſpecies of talent which his natural good ſenſe directed him to make HIS OWN. Their's was powerful reaſoning; his, accordingly, was elegant language; their's was vigour; his, grace; their's, vehemence; his, dignity. The ſyſtem *they* founded on ſtrong ſenſe, *he* ſapped by pathos; the aſſertions *they* brought forward with bold conviction, *he* evaded by prudent caution; the errors *they* committed, through intemperate raſhneſs, *he* oppoſed and overthrew, by all the power of ready detection, violent exaggeration, and repeated triumph. In the beginning, however, of his political career, Mr. Pitt boaſted few advantages from Nature. A ready flow of words, without ideas ſufficient to embody them, and a pronunciation, graceful, yet confined only to one key, were the peculiar characters of his parliamentary eloquence. But,

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as raw and undiſciplined troops, by frequent ſkirmiſhes with an enemy verſed in the arts of conteſt, ſoon learn their manœuvres and their weakneſſes, ſo did *he*, with admirable judgment, avoid what he diſcovered detrimental to its own purpoſe, in the conduct of his opponents; ſelect for his imitation, whatever in them appeared an ornament and a grace; and, by the aid of unwearied care and culture, rear on this ſolid ground-work, a manner of his own, highly impreſſive, and extremely beautiful. As he became more experienced in public buſineſs, the variety of incidents that daily occurred, and the lights which frequently aroſe from the obſervations and reaſoning of the other party, furniſhed matter for his own mind to work upon, and called forth arguments for his own language to decorate and dignify. Thus has Mr. Pitt gradually arrived to that power of mind which he at preſent poſſeſſes; and perſeverance, practice, conſtancy, and attention, have brought to perfection thoſe fruits, of which Nature had once given but a ſparing promiſe, by a few gay, and gaudy, bloſſoms. His manner, indeed, at preſent, is graceful, animated, and dignified: elegant in his action, diſtinct and emphatic in his enunciation, correct and flowing in his language, and ingenious and able in his reaſoning. One merit for which he is peculiarly conſpicuous, is the perfect maſtery he has over his paſſions, when it might be ſuppoſed that the

ſeverity or injuſtice of his adverſaries, and the general indignation which their harangues frequently excite againſt him, would throw him entirely off his guard. On theſe occaſions, he always riſes perfectly collected, and retaliates invective with dignified warmth, or diſarms reſentment by irreſiſtible pathos, without ſuffering himſelf to be overcome, or hurried into any imprudence by exceſs of feeling, or violence of paſſion. Under Mr. Pitt's Adminiſtration, however—whether from a laudable wiſh of improving the finances, and reſcuing the credit of the nation; or from a deſire of ſupplying ſuch expences as are conſtantly incurred from the fatal neceſſity, according to the preſent falſe ſyſtem of politics, of increaſing the means of corrupt influence—it cannot be denied that a concern for the revenue ſeems to have ſuperſeded all regard for the liberty of the ſubject, and that taxes have been impoſed on the people of this country, extremely partial and oppreſſive. Hence, are his abilities more frequently employed in varniſhing meaſures, that, in their own nature, are likely to become unpopular, by ſpecious and plauſible ſophiſtry, than in maintaining their juſtice by fair and candid argument; hence, is he reduced to the neceſſity rather of reſting on the confidence of the Houſe for their ſupport, than of courting their examination; and hence, is he too often obliged to ſilence doubt and enquiry,

enquiry by no fairer means than the lofty and impoſing language of miniſterial authority. The occaſion that called forth Mr. Pitt's moſt diſtinguiſhed efforts, was the Regency buſineſs; at which time his abilities had been brought to their due maturity, and, whatever be our opinion of the rectitude of his meaſures,* he, at leaſt, maintained thoſe meaſures with great firmneſs, notwithſtanding the violent reſiſtance from Oppoſition, and diſplayed, in their defence, uncommon powers of animated debate. The ſubjects that exhibited his conduct to *leaſt* advantage have been the Negociations with Spain, and with Ruſſia. But, with regard to the latter of theſe points, if there has been any act in the public life of Mr. Pitt, that ought to be ſelected as peculiarly entitled to praiſe, it is that of having given up his intentions, when he diſcovered that they were wrong, and diſbanded an armament, though already fitted out, rather than perſevere in meaſures which ſeemed obnoxious to the ſenſe of the Nation.

Popularity, however, is, too often, the child of caprice. Political characters frequently enjoy it moſt when they leaſt deſerve it, and loſe

* I know that the ſentiment, in favour of Mr. Pitt's conduct in that buſineſs, is almoſt univerſal. This, however, does not convince me that ſuch ſentiment is right, nor prevent me from holding the opinion I formerly maintained. See a Pamphlet entitled, "Free Thoughts on his Majeſty's Recovery."

it in conſequence of ſome ſenſeleſs watch-word, coined by the cunning, and circulated among the people, with currency proportioned to their ignorance of the little real value of ſo baſe a counterfeit. "The multitude (ſays Roſcommon) are always in the wrong," and a ſmall degree of obſervation is ſufficient to convince us that this is the fact almoſt in the unlimited extent aſſerted by the poet; but eſpecially in political matters; and, as the people do not ſeem to have been peculiarly happy in the application either of their praiſe or cenſure of the conduct of this Miniſter, I ſhall not wonder if his next, and irrevocable loſs of popular favour, were to ariſe, leſs from his own miſconduct, than in conſequence of ſome miſconception in the public mind, or of ſome miſrepreſentation by the arts of party. From the friends, however, of civil, and, eſpecially, of religious eſtabliſhments, Mr. Pitt may expect the continuance of attachment and ſupport; as he has manifeſted himſelf inimical to the repeal of the Teſt and Corporation-Acts, with a firmneſs that, at this moment, cannot but excite the gratitude of thoſe well-wiſhers to the privileges of the Eſtabliſhed Church, who conceive that ſuch a repeal would tend to ſubvert the Conſtitution of this country.

One of the moſt powerful and uſeful advocates in Parliament, in favour of the meaſures of our preſent

preſent miniſter, is Mr. DUNDAS. The general diſtruſt of principle in a man who ſides with every Adminiſtration, and appears to have forſaken his party, when they loſe their power, has tended much to derogate, in the public opinion, from a juſt eſtimate of this gentleman's abilities. But Mr. Dundas is, certainly, a very bold, fair, and forcible ſpeaker; and his political conduct is, perhaps, more offenſive than that of other party-men, only becauſe it is more manly, and becauſe he avows, in the face of day, the ſyſtem which they more corruptly and fatally carry on in ſecret. I would not recall to your mind the memory of a man, of whom you muſt ſtill have ſome recollection, but that, according to good report, he is greatly improved ſince the period when you remember him in Parliament. He has almoſt entirely diveſted himſelf of that provincial accent, which, as a ſpeaker, operated, formerly, ſo much againſt him; and, though loud, rapid, and impetuous, in his utterance, he meets every queſtion with a manly fairneſs, and, allowing to his adverſaries their own premiſes, breaks through the moſt preſſing difficulties, and, with great vigour of mind, draws from them inferences directly contrary to thoſe, which, *prima facie*, carry the ſtrongeſt evidence in their favour. Such powers are, no doubt, a valuable acquiſition to any party; and, from the abilities of Mr. Dundas, it is no

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injuſtice to ſay, that Mr. Pitt's Adminiſtration has derived its beſt ſupport.

Mr. Pitt has, indeed, by no means, derived equal ſupport from the other members of his Party. I merely allude to that ſupport which ariſes from the power and influence of public ſpeaking. The manner of Mr. BEAUFOY is, indeed, highly poliſhed, and the language extremely elegant; but his ſpeeches appear to have been ſo equally laboured throughout, that they loſe vigour by unvaried ſweetneſs, and tire the ear, without arreſting the attention. Mr. WILBERFORCE, likewiſe, poſſeſſes conſiderable talents; but though this worthy Member votes with the Miniſter, from a ſincere opinion of the general rectitude of his meaſures, he does not ſtep forward ſo often as to juſtify me in denominating him a party-man, or to praiſe him as eminently aiding the meaſures of Adminiſtration. Lord BELGRAVE, ſo far as to delivery, is an admirable ſpeaker, and, if his matter anſwered to his manner, would deſervedly rank high for parliamentary eloquence. Unfortunately, however, for his Lordſhip, he has *ideas* yet to acquire; his ſpeeches, however graceful, being little better than a verboſe expanſion of intellectual nothingneſs. Mr. RIDER promiſes beſt of all the riſing Members on the miniſterial benches, and was deſervedly complimented by Mr. Fox at the concluſion of the negociation with

with Spain, when the papers relative to that buſineſs were with-held from the examination of the Houſe of Commons, for the only able ſpeech that had been delivered in favour of that meaſure. When his vivacity ſhall have been properly tempered by time, he will, no doubt, become eminently uſeful to the Miniſterial party. There are ſome few other young members of conſiderable promiſe, who lend their aid to the preſent Adminiſtration; but none who have diſplayed their powers ſo often as to enable me to attempt an eſtimate of their merit, or, at preſent, of ſufficient conſequence in political life, to render any ſtatement either intereſting or neceſſary.

With regard to the Oppoſition, it is needleſs to preſent you with a detail of the character and talents, as an Orator and Stateſman, of their leader, Mr. Fox. You, my dear Sir, paid a tribute of admiration to his abilities, long before I ever witneſſed their exertion. But as it were, indeed, abſurd to paſs by ſuch a character without mention, it is proper to remark that his eloquence ſtill preſerves many of the characters by which I remember it to have been diſtinguiſhed, when the American war gave a very different complexion, from the preſent, to the face of public affairs. He was then bold and violent, in his meaſures, as in his reaſoning; and manifeſted a vigorous and determined Oppoſition to the conduct of the Miniſtry.

Miniſtry. If Mr. Fox's manner differs, in any reſpect, at the preſent moment, it is that his notions are even more enlightened by experience, and that the aſperities of his mind are worne away. He rarely deſcends to perſonal attack; but ſtill exhibits the ſame dauntleſs ſpirit, the ſame zeal for liberty, and the ſame ſallies of unexpected and maſterly reaſoning. The ſtyle and manner, indeed, of this ſpeaker, form a very ſtriking contraſt to the ſtyle and manner of the Miniſter. Each exhibits excellencies, for the moſt part, of a very different nature from the excellencies of the other. Mr. Pitt's oratory is diſtinguiſhed by graceful action and correct language. Mr. Fox by no means excels in the firſt quality, and frequent inaccuracies of expreſſion, committed in the warmth of ſpeech, often prove him to be too negligent of the latter. Mr. Pitt's enunciation is diſtinct as audible: the delivery of Mr. Fox, when arguments preſs moſt upon his mind, peculiarly rapid and impetuous. The one ſpeaks according to the ſoundeſt dictates of his head, the other appears governed by the impulſe of the feelings of his heart. Mr. Pitt exhibits powerful abilities: Mr. Fox diſplays uncommon genius. Mr. Pitt perſuades: Mr. Fox convinces. The eloquence of the former is diſtinguiſhed by animation, dignity, and pathos: that of the latter, by energy and fire. With a figure as much contraſted as that of his adverſary, Mr. Fox does not

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even experience any disadvantage from a very corpulent habit of body, but irresistibly interests his hearers in the cause he undertakes, even where that cause is least favourable to their prejudices; and, engaging with earnestness, in whatever his feelings lead him to defend, reminds us of Quintilian's description of Pericles, "who was said to speak in thunder and lightening."

If we wish to turn to the unfavourable parts of Mr. Fox's character, we shall find this Statesman, like every other, who has either presided at the helm of Government, or conducted a formidable Opposition, rendered the object of a variety of accusations. These, for the most part, as they were unfounded in justice or truth, outlived not the resentment and malice that first produced them. But the circumstance that pressed hardest on his popularity, was his memorable Coalition with the late Lord North. It was said, indeed, that Mr. Fox's quarrel with that Minister, arose in consequence of the American War, and that it had been folly to continue at variance, when such War existed no longer: but the public mind revolted at the idea of so sudden a friendship succeeding so violent an hostility, and concluded that the sole object of both parties, must have been the gratification of their own interest and ambition. To those who are well versed in the Parliamentary History of Great-Britain, this Coalition will appear no uncommon incident, nor

any very violent breach of public and private principle; and there were not then wanting vindicators of an act, which, however repugnant to the general principles of conduct between man and man, they thought juſtifiable where *parties* were concerned, and where a great and important intereſt was at ſtake. But their efforts were overpowered by the general outcry; and the arts of a riſing party, it may naturally be ſuppoſed, were not wanting to foment and aggravate the popular indignation.

The moſt culpable part, however, of Mr. Fox's public character, in my opinion, is his conduct with regard to the Middleſex Election, which, in peruſing the circumſtances of the caſe, appears to me to have been in direct defiance of every principle of liberty, and which the exertions of the greateſt orators in Parliament, and the literary powers of a Johnſon without doors, in vain attempted to varniſh over with a colourable excuſe. All the excuſe that can be offered for Mr. Fox's conduct, is, that he was then but young in his political career, and that being a member of Adminiſtration, he might think it incumbent on him to defend, without exception, all the meaſures of government: Such is the accurſed ſyſtem of governing by Party! Moſt other young men, however, would have conſtantly purſued the ſame courſe they firſt adopted: while Mr. Fox evinced a contrary conduct; and,

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diſdaining to ſubmit to the direction of others, his abilities ſoon marked him out for the head of a party.

Mr. Fox is, at preſent, accuſed of democratical principles; and his avowed wiſh for the Repeal of the Teſt-Act, and exultation at the triumph of Liberty in France, has ſerved to ſtrengthen and encourage that opinion. So far as a regard for the rights of mankind, and the happineſs of every claſs of citizens, extends, I believe this conception to be perfectly juſt: but no man who conſiders how much Mr. Fox is ſurrounded with friends deeply concerned in the intereſt of the *Ariſtocracy*, and what obligations he fancies himſelf to owe to the ſupport of the families of Cavendiſh and Bentinck, can, for a moment, ſuppoſe it probable that he will ever venture to infuſe too ſtrong a tincture of democratic principles into the government of this country. His deſire, ſo cordially expreſſed, of ſeeing all ſects, whatever be their religious opinions, admitted to equal rights and privileges in the State, even if it ſhould be totally indefenſible on the grounds of political expedience (for it certainly is not on thoſe of abſtract juſtice) has evidently ariſen from feelings of liberality. Liberal feelings, indeed, are the moſt ſtriking traits of this gentleman's character. He is violent, becauſe his paſſions are ſtrong;—and thoſe paſſions are generally employed on adequate objects. To

the ſame ſource may be traced his love of pleaſure, of which tolerable advantage has been taken by the literary agents of his adverſaries. But the extreme violence of his temper, and thoſe daſhing habits which had marked the greateſt part of his parliamentary career, are now mellowed down into more amiable and eſtimable qualities; and ſo far even has his mind operated on his features, that, without profeſſing myſelf an adept in the ſcience of Lavater, I think a man muſt indeed want penetration, who, on the firſt ſight of his countenance, does not judge Mr. Fox's diſpoſition to be that of perfect benevolence and philanthropy. It cannot, however, be denied that his political conduct, even at preſent, manifeſts too determined a plan of indiſcriminately oppoſing Miniſtry, and, conſequently, of ſometimes oppoſing where oppoſition is undeſerved; an error that neceſſarily reſults from the favourite and fatal ſyſtem of proceeding according to the views of party, rather than of acting from general principles of legiſlation. But whatever be the errors of Mr. Fox, we cannot number among them equivocation, concealment, or diſguiſe, of any ſort; and, whether his opinions be favourable or repugnant to our own, muſt certainly allow him the praiſe of always ſpeaking as he thinks, and of proving himſelf, without exception, the moſt manly and decided character in the Britiſh Parliament.

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Mr. Fox, on the whole, has ſomewhat more reaſon to feel grateful for the exertions of his friends in Parliament, than the Miniſter; and among other able aſſiſtance, can boaſt ſupport no leſs powerful than that which reſults from the ſplendid talents of a SHERIDAN. The eloquence of this gentleman, may, indeed, be ranked equal to that of our firſt ſpeakers, and, though he exhibit not the perfections of a Pitt or a Fox, in the peculiar excellencies of the oratory of each, his ſtyle is more richly varied, and, on all ſubjects, he claims no leſs attention than either. His eloquence, which, when not too familiar and eaſy, obtains, from an impaſſioned tone and manner, a maſtery over the feelings of his hearers, is diſtinguiſhed by a vein of ſtrong ſenſe, recommended and adorned by language always animated and elegant, and frequently poetical and flowery; and an uncommon keenneſs of wit, and facility of combining ludicrous and oppoſite images, give peculiar poignancy to ſarcaſm when folly or arrogance appear to demand it. With ſuch talents, we may fairly conclude that Mr. Sheridan cannot but have received very large and liberal offers from the preſent Adminiſtion. It muſt, indeed, betray a deplorable ignorance of parliamentary politics to ſuppoſe the contrary: But it does not appear that he has been ever moved by ſuch offers,

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or that any conſideration has tempted him to deſert his party. Conſiſtency, indeed, has been the peculiar characteriſtic of Mr. Sheridan's public conduct: while others have veered about, as the peſtilential gale of intereſt directed, he ſeems to have remained firm, and unſhaken from his firſt intentions: and as he came into Parliament an admirer of the Britiſh Conſtitution, and a friend and ſupporter of Mr. Fox, ſo has he never diſgraced his political conduct by forgetting the one, or by abandoning the other. With an innate hatred of oppreſſion, and generous enthuſiaſm in favour of rational liberty, Mr. Sheridan's mind is ſaid to be highly accompliſhed, and his diſpoſition marked by great and noble qualities. With ſuch perfections, however, no man is more generally rendered the object of traduction and ſlander. Many of our party-publications teem with the moſt perſonal and the groſſeſt libels on him; and it is almoſt impoſſible to enter any mixed or large company, but, whatever acrimony may be beſtowed on other public characters, the moſt illiberal part of the abuſe is ſtudiouſly applied to this gentleman: though, on examination, it will be perceived that ſcarcely the ſlighteſt ground of cenſure is to be gathered from this indefinite invective, which can amount to a ſingle article of fair and honeſt crimination. Of ſuch circum-

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ſtances, it will not be very difficult to trace the cauſe, when we conſider the acuteneſs, and the pointed ſatire, with which Mr. Sheridan detects and expoſes the political vices of Adminiſtration. Hence has every engine been ſet at work to run down his credit with the public; and we cannot wonder, when unfortunate habits of careleſſneſs and procraſtination mark the cenſurable features of this gentleman's character, that the natural indolence of Mr. Sheridan's diſpoſition, ſhould tend to produce, in addition to his public, many private enemies. Every man who meets with neglect, feels himſelf leſſened in his own opinion; and ſo malignant is human nature, that, however lenient we may feel towards the perpetrators of the moſt profligate crimes that can injure ſociety, we are by no means equally inclined to forget and forgive thoſe who prove the means of mortifying our perſonal ſelf-importance.

Mr. Sheridan, beſides his political acquirements, has frequently proved himſelf to poſſeſs a very elegant and tender vein of poetry; and, as a dramatiſt, is juſtly deemed the firſt comic writer of his age. His Rivals, School for Scandal, and Duenna, ſparkle with as much elegant wit, as the Comedies of Congreve, at the ſame time that they are deſtitute of Congreve's profligate morals and diſguſting obſcenity. But as Mr. Sheridan has long ſince

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forſaken the Muſes, it is to be feared that he either ſuffers his indolence to repreſs his powers, or has caught the contagion of Congreve's weakneſs; and deems it diſgraceful to be conſidered as a dramatic writer. If the *firſt* be the cauſe of his inexertion, it is indeed to be lamented, and he may, in ſome meaſure, be arraigned as criminal for neglecting thoſe powers which might ſo effectually be employed in the amuſement and amendment of ſociety: If the *ſecond*, it is a piece of affectation, beneath the level of ſo manly an underſtanding. No character can ſurely claim a greater degree of perſonal reſpect from ſociety, than that of the able Writer who dedicates his faculties to worthy purpoſes. Hume gives the preference to the Stateſman; yet ſurely if this poſition be admitted, it will not be denied that even the honours of the Stateſman receive additional dignity and beauty from the laurels of Literature. But the juſtice of Hume's aſſertion appears, to me, extremely diſputable: Every man's claim to perſonal reſpect ought to be proportioned to the extent of his public ſervices; and Stateſmen, at the beſt, can but benefit their country, while Men of Letters benefit mankind.

Next to Mr. Sheridan, Mr. WYNDHAM merits mention as an able ſpeaker in favour of the meaſures of Oppoſition. Mr. Wyndham, however, does

not poſſeſs many of the eſſential qualities of a real Orator. In his parliamentary ſpeeches, he appeals only to men of ſound judgment, and not to the mixed multitude, and convinces the underſtanding, rather than affects the paſſions. Correct and fluent in his language, he is acute, ſubtle, and logical, in his arguments; not eaſily followed by vulgar comprehenſions; and even by vigorous minds, leſs eaſily refuted. His mode of reaſoning is conducted according to the ſyllogiſtic form of the ſchools, in which he is uncommonly expert; and he purſues a long train of well-arranged ratiocination, better than any other Member of either Houſe.

Mr. Grey is, at preſent, but a young man, yet, if we may judge from the ſpecimens he has already given us of his Parliamentary abilities, he promiſes, at ſome future period, to become one of the moſt ſplendid characters in the Britiſh Senate. His ſtyle is correct, emphatic, and animated, and his *forte* lies in exciting emotions of ſympathetic indignation againſt thoſe meaſures which he himſelf ſo warmly reprobates. If my deſcription of Mr. Pitt's oratory ſhall have conveyed clear ideas to your mind on the ſubject, you cannot form a more juſt conception of the eloquence of Mr. Grey than by likening it with that of the Miniſter. In tones, utterance, and action, they are much the ſame, and, if any

difference can be marked out between the peculiar merits of each, it is that Mr. Pitt, when he pleaſes, ſways the pathetic paſſions of the audience with greater ſkill, while Mr. Grey chiefly excels in animating their reſentment. The language, likewiſe, of Mr. Pitt, is more beautified by elegance, that of Mr. Grey more ſtrengthened by terſeneſs. One moſt favourable point of Mr. Grey's public character, is his zeal for Parliamentary Reform; and it is to be hoped, that, as the object is great and virtuous, he will deſpiſe all conſequences, and ſtrenuouſly exert himſelf, both within doors, and without, for its attainment.

There are, no doubt, many other Members of the Houſe of Commons, in the intereſt of Oppoſition, of great promiſe; but thoſe whom I have already mentioned, have given ſufficient proofs of their oratorical powers to merit being numbered among the moſt eloquent men in the Britiſh Parliament: and it were uſeleſs and unſatisfactory to ſeek for farther examples, on either ſide, from thoſe who may have manifeſted conſiderable talents, on particular occaſions, but who have not ſignalized themſelves, as ſpeakers, often enough to juſtify me in giving a decided eſtimate of their reſpective merits.

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The Upper Houſe (as it is called) falls far ſhort of the Houſe of Commons, in point of oratorical excellence. Yet there are, certainly, characters, though their number be ſmall, who deſervedly rank high, as able and maſterly ſpeakers. Of theſe, it may be obſerved, that the meaſures of the Miniſter hitherto derived their great ſupport from the manly ſenſe, and dignified delivery, of a THURLOW; and now derive it from the correctly argumentative, though not very extenſive, abilities of a GRENVILLE. On the other hand, the cauſe of Oppoſition receives its beſt aid from the poliſhed language, and elegantly arranged arguments, of a STORMONT, and the pointed, forcible, and luminous oratory of a LOUGHBOROUGH. Lord STANHOPE, likewiſe, may be conſidered as an able ſpeaker, ſince his eloquence is diſtinguiſhed by energy, and his obſervations by originality and vigour. In the opinion of a common obſerver, indeed, the appearance and manner of this nobleman muſt operate to his diſadvantage; but thoſe who well conſider his Lordſhip's conduct, and examine deeper than the ſurface of things, will rank him as a man not only of ſcience and ſtrong underſtanding, but of liberal opinions and pure patriotiſm.

The Marquis of LANSDOWNE may well be numbered among the firſt characters of the Houſe

of Peers, not merely for his talents as an Orator, but as a Stateſman who has formerly ſuſtained the high character of Miniſter of this country, and whoſe opinions in Parliament are now liſtened to with the moſt anxious attention. His Lordſhip, certainly, is a character of great weight; and his knowledge in the ſcience of politics, no leſs than his ſituation, deſervedly place him in ſuch high eſteem. As an Orator, he is diſtinguiſhed by a dignified warmth of utterance, and a captivating elegance of language. As a Politician, even his *private* character produces ſome teſtimonies in his favour, ſince he is ſaid to maintain, at very great expence, for his own ſatisfaction and information, a correſpondence in every Court of Europe. Hence, from his early knowledge of important foreign intelligence, his Lordſhip may well prove an object of great conſequence, either as a friend or enemy, in the eyes of any Miniſter. It is, however, conjectured, from the neutral courſe which the Marquis of Lanſdowne has, of late, adopted in Parliament, that he has ſome faint hopes of forming a party to himſelf, and of again aſpiring, ſhould affairs take any turn that may favour the attempt (which, in the various unexpected changes of events, is not impoſſible) to the office of firſt Miniſter of this country. But this Nobleman, whatever be his influence in Parliament, wants that eſſential advantage to a public character,

which

which both Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox enjoy, though in different degrees—the eſteem and favour of the people. Though the motives of moſt ſtateſmen be the ſame, the purity of his Lordſhip's ſeem peculiarly to be queſtioned; and a certain indeciſion of character, obliquity of conduct, and evaſion of an explanation of direct opinions on great and important ſubjects, have naturally operated, in the public mind, much to his prejudice. Free-men love that thoſe who are likely to become the guardians of their civil liberty, ſhould, *unequivocally*, avow their public principles.—Lord Lanſdowne, however, merits great praiſe for the encouragement and patronage which he beſtows on the votaries of philoſophy and ſcience; a conduct the more noble, as ſuch characters are not very well qualified to requite thoſe favours by any adequate political ſervices. Men, fixed in the habits of patient and regular enquiry, and accuſtomed to diſpaſſionate inveſtigation into the component principles of things, to repeat and vary unſucceſsful experiments, and to weigh, with care, opinions, which, after having been adopted for ſome time, are obliged to be abandoned for others, are not calculated to prove very uſeful to parties in a State, but rather ſhrink from the rude and buſy face of public life, to the tranquil boſom of ſilent retirement. To ſuch men, however, it is thought the Marquis of Lanſdowne's protection

is not alone confined; and, if we may credit the important rumour of the day, his Lordſhip's influence is the ſpring which actuates the conduct of Mr. HORNE TOOKE without doors. To me, however, there appears to be but little ground for an aſſertion, which, moſt probably, ariſes only from the propenſity of mankind to attribute the proceedings of every public character to intereſted motives. Mr. Tooke, with limited connections, narrow fortune, and an evident deſire of inſpiring a ſpirit of independence in the people at large, is not the moſt likely object to ſerve the purpoſes of an ambitious individual in Parliament. What may be this gentleman's intentions, I know not, but I really believe them to be honeſt; and, judging from what little I can learn of his character, from facts, I think his mind too upright and ſpirited to ſubmit to the ſhackles of the will of any man whatever. He is decried as inconſiſtent, and has frequently excited the indignation of others, when he has rudely attacked thoſe characters whom he once defended. But at the ſame time that his perſonal attacks are ſometimes acrimonious in the extreme, I believe Mr. Tooke to have always maintained his principles with perfect conſiſtency, and to have abandoned particular men and parties only when he thought they deſerted thoſe very principles, after having profeſſed, and affected, to maintain them. If Mr. Tooke were to avoid an

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offenſive appearance of perſonal malignity in his political conteſts, and rather to think of meaſures than of men, he would render himſelf leſs liable to ſeverity of cenſure, than, in this reſpect, he ſo amply deſerves: but when we reflect, on the other hand, that he has *always* been ſtrenuous in the cauſe of liberty, that his quarrels with every character of weight and influence in Parliament, are totally irreconcileable with his private intereſt, and that all parties join in decrying him; it will appear evident that he muſt be ſwayed by manly and diſintereſted motives, that he muſt have too many enemies not to be a great and good man, and that, therefore, he deſerves the approbation of every honeſt member of the community.

Requeſting that you will excuſe this ſhort, and unavoidable digreſſion,

I remain, dear Sir, &c.

LETTER III.

Reaſons for having omitted to mention Mr. BURKE—*Importance, in a political and philoſophical light, of the* FRENCH REVOLUTION—*Of the different Principles, conſidered as the baſis of Civil Authority—Brief Hiſtory of the* REVOLUTION *in* FRANCE, *to the Formation of the Conſtitution and its Sanction by the King.*

SIR,

I HAVE obtained my object, ſhould my laſt Letter have conveyed to your mind tolerably clear ideas of the peculiar ſtyles and excellencies of the firſt Orators in the Britiſh Parliament. But you think that I have been guilty of an omiſſion, by neglecting to notice ſo diſtinguiſhed a character as EDMUND BURKE; and I will readily confeſs, that a narrative, which profeſſes to give even a rapid review of the prominent perſonages in public life, were imperfect, indeed, if it ſhould paſs by a name, ſo diſtinguiſhed in the ranks of literature and politics, without

without praiſe, or without attention. To ſpeak of him as a writer, had been turning aſide from the original intention of my ſtrictures, and I thought it needleſs to mention him as an orator, ſince your memory muſt ſtill retain ſome idea of his peculiar merits, too ſtrongly marked by his manner, to be ſoon forgotten. You muſt ſtill remember the extravagance of his action, the wild exuberance of his fancy, the vehemence of his paſſions, and the weakneſs of his judgment. His forced utterance; and attitudes, *outrès*, and almoſt *groteſques*; muſt, even now, preſent themſelves to your imagination. You behold him, no doubt, *this* moment, hurried beyond the bounds of reaſon and juſtice, by the impetuoſity of his anger; and know not whether to be moſt aſtoniſhed or delighted, *the next*, with the rich colouring of the pictures of his fancy, the prompt illuſtration of his ſubject, by terms and circumſtances readily drawn from literature and ſcience, and the felicity of the appropriation of his claſſical alluſions.

In a ſubſequent part of your Letter, you aſſign, as the chief reaſon for having noticed ſo material an omiſſion, the wiſh you entertained of learning my ſentiments on the conduct of Mr. Burke, relative to an event, which has, of late, engaged his greateſt powers, as well as on the event itſelf, unparalleled in the annals of human

hiſtory, viz. the FRENCH REVOLUTION. I confeſs, that an additional motive for then inducing me to avoid any alluſion to that gentleman's name, was my intention of adverting to his merits, at leaſt incidentally, when the ſubject of the great change in the manners and government of a neighbouring people ſhould employ my pen on ſome future moment. And, flattered as I feel by your requeſt, I cannot do leſs than dedicate one letter entirely to the conſideration of an event ſo worthy of philoſophical contemplation, ſo new to the eyes of the moſt experienced politician, ſo intereſting to the feelings of all neighbouring nations, and ſo pregnant (as I think) in its final conſequences, to the remoteſt communities of mankind.

I do not wonder that you ſhould have paid leſs attention to the circumſtances of that Revolution than you now think they muſt naturally have demanded. Situated as you are, the means of authentic and impartial information, with regard to a political occurrence of this nature, are not readily attainable. Nor can I leſs wonder that you ſhould heſitate to avow the ſentiments, which it becomes you to avow, while, even among the ſmall circle of your country friends, opinions are ſo various and contradictory; becauſe I know that you ſuſpend your judgment, whenever you feel not perfectly acquainted with the facts on which

which that judgment ought to be founded. With me, however, who deem the ſimple, general fact ſufficient to juſtify a deciſion, there cannot exiſt the ſhadow of a doubt upon the ſubject. France had long been ruled by an arbitrary and oppreſſive government. The whole body of the Nation (ſome very trivial number, indeed, excepted, who were perſonally intereſted in maintaining the ancient ſyſtem) determined to be free, and, on the ruins of the old government, erected ſuch an one, as, in their opinion, was moſt liberal, and beſt ſuited for the purpoſes of national happineſs. The queſtion, therefore, is, Whether a *whole Nation* are, or are not, juſtified in reſiſting and diſſolving a government which they conſider as tyrannous and oppreſſive, and in eſtabliſhing another in its ſtead? And to this queſtion, I do not ſee how any man, who will diveſt his mind of habitual prejudice and intereſted motives, can forbear to anſwer in the affirmative. For from what principle can any government derive its authority, but the conſent of the People? It may be ſaid, with ſome writers on civil polity, that it derives its authority from *Force:* but Force (unleſs we were to ſpeak of the Force of reaſon and virtue) is, ſurely, a vicious ground for any authority whatever; and, even allowing the baſis to be juſt, the aſſertion, when applied to the caſe of France, tells in favour of my opinion; for the Force of

thoſe who had hitherto ſubmitted to the former government, proved ſuperior to the Force of the men who governed them; otherwiſe, they had failed in their endeavours to effect a Revolution. Many perſons there are, likewiſe, who maintain, that the right of thoſe who command is ordained of God, and that civil government has its exiſtence in HIS WILL, and, therefore, claims our unqualified ſubjection. But they who hold this language, without admitting reſtriction of circumſtances, either meanto impoſe on the underſtandings of others, or do not ſee the end and danger of their argument. Is vice ordained by God? Are public grievances ordained by God? Can it be the will of God, that a government, which is hoſtile to the freedom and felicity of his creatures, ſhould ever diſgrace the Earth, while there exiſts integrity and power ſufficient to root it up, and to deſtroy it? Theſe were the evils of the ancient Monarchy of France; evils which muſt always prevail, when a Nation at large are tempted to revolt: and it is a pitiful attempt to ſuſtain the falling fabric of deſpotiſm and bigotry, by referring its exiſtence to the "Will of God." Such means of ſilencing immediate reſiſtance, not only incapacitate the human faculties from generous exertions in times of civil danger, but lead to an impeachment of the moral attributes of the Supreme Being. What was the fate of thoſe, who, under the former ſyſtem in France, chanced to render politics the ſubject of their converſation

converſation and enquiry, let the Annals of that Government, proclaim in the dark and bloody records of her miſerable victims. And can a ſyſtem of civil Adminiſtration, which depends, for its exiſtence, only on fraud and cruelty, be ordained of GOD? Rather ought we to aſſent to the converſe of the propoſition of thoſe who would enforce paſſive obedience to the ruling powers, by referring them to the divine Will, and aſſert that no Government whatever, though permitted for a while, *can* be ordained of God, or ſanctioned by his Will, but that which, in its principles, comes neareſt to his own Nature; that which dares challenge inveſtigation; that which diffuſes freedom, tolerance, and juſtice; that, in ſhort, which is founded on the wiſe and immutable principles of TRUTH and BENEVOLENCE.

As it will, however, prove ſatisfactory to your mind, to be informed of the chief occurrences which led to the French Revolution, and of the means by which it was accompliſhed, I ſhall trace, in due order, thoſe intereſting events. The deſultory ſtyle of epiſtolary correſpondence, will not admit a Narrative, involving every circumſtance incidentally or remotely connected with that Revolution; but the leading facts will ſuffice for our preſent purpoſe, and theſe I ſhall ſtate with all the fidelity and truth, though not

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with the neceſſary amplitude and elegance, of an Hiſtorian.

I know not whether we ought to attribute the fact to the ſpecial interference of Providence, or, perhaps with more reaſon and more philoſophy, to conſider it as the neceſſary conſequence of the eſtabliſhed order of things; but certain it is, and it cannot have eſcaped every attentive obſerver of human life, that injuſtice of all kinds, however ſucceſsful for a time, always reverts, at laſt, with redoubled vengeance on the miſerable heads of thoſe who firſt promoted, or afterwards maintained it. Such was the caſe with the Government of France, which having been long ſince founded on the baſis of tyranny, was doomed, at laſt, to incur the puniſhment of its own evil, by ſeeking to gratify its ambitious views in the very means which, finally, proved its overthrow. France, ſubject to the principles of deſpotic Monarchy, had, for a conſiderable period of time, been equally diſtinguiſhed for the oppreſſion of her people, and the reſtleſs ambition of her Court in the extenſion of foreign Conqueſts. The encouragement of letters was neceſſary to maintain the ſplendour of the Monarchy, and, as it is the peculiar property of great minds to act only for the general good, that genius which had been

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firſt encouraged for the baſeſt purpoſes, was exerted for the nobleſt; and, indifferent to all private regards, and perſonal conſequences, deemed its labours beſt employed in the virtuous office of *enlightening the People*. As their ſituation convinced them of the evils of ſlavery, their writers taught them to figh for the dignity and happineſs of freedom: and the inſidious conduct of their Court towards this country, in the American War, tended to bring to a criſis, the operation of ſuch principles. The effect of this War could be nothing elſe than to import from America thoſe ſentiments of independence which the troops had naturally imbibed there, and, at the ſame time, when it thus tended to confirm the people in juſt and liberal ſentiments, it rendered their humiliated ſituation the leſs tolerable, by ſubjecting them to thoſe heavy burthens which were neceſſary to defray the enormous expences thus incurred. Oppreſſions, likewiſe, of another nature—the abuſes of office, the arrogance of the Ariſtocracy, the corrupt adminiſtration of public affairs, all grown exceſſive from long and unreſiſted practice, were more galling at a moment when the nation was diſtreſſed by the ſcarcity of proviſions and the want of pecuniary reſources. The variety of arbitrary and oppreſſive actions of powerful individuals, excited ſome little fermentation among the people, and induced the Parliament of Bourdeaux to remonſtrate to the King. The

Provincial

Provincial Parliaments were, at that time, the only organ by which the general ſenſe of injuſtice could be officially expreſſed: and the ſpirited conduct of the Parliament of Bourdeaux was admired and applauded by thoſe of Aix, Toulouſe, and Grenoble. The remonſtrance, however, contrary to expectation, was received graciouſly, and the evils of which it complained, were ſhortly afterwards redreſſed. A general correction of abuſes ſeemed to be approaching; a reform of the Clergy was talked of; and many great grievances were held out as intended to be remedied. But the Meeting of the Clergy ended to the complete diſſatisfaction of the inferior orders; and promiſe of a redreſs of grievances ſeemed, from the event, to have been held out only as a lure to induce the Parliaments * more readily to conſent to

* "The French *Parleniens* are only Courts of Juſtice; that of Paris was inſtituted in the ſame manner, and for the ſame purpoſes, as the *Aula Regis* was, afterwards, in England, viz. for the adminiſtration of public Juſtice, and for deciding the differences between the King and his Barons: it was in conſequence of the Judgments awarded by that Court, that the King proceeded to ſeize the dominions of thoſe Lords or Princes againſt whom a ſentence had been paſſed, and when he was able to effect this, united them to the Crown. The *Parliament* of Paris, as do the other Courts of Law, grounds its judgments upon the *Edits* or *Ordonnances* of the King, when it has once regiſtered them. When theſe *Ordonnances* are looked upon as grievous to the Subject, the Parliament refuſes to regiſter them; but this they do not from any pretenſion they have to a ſhare in the Legiſlative Authority; they only object that they are not ſatisfied that

to enregiſter ſome edicts for new taxes, which, at a moment of difficulty, like the preſent, were not likely to prove very popular, or to leſſen the national odium, of attempting to evade their effects, by calling a general Aſſembly of Notables. Parliament, indeed, had already proved themſelves unwilling to ſanction the farther impoſition of very oppreſſive burthens, by exerciſing that portion of power, which, though contrary to the principles of an abſolute Monarchy, had been allowed conſtitutionally to reſide in them, for the purpoſe, no doubt, of giving the requiſite formality to the meaſures of Adminiſtration. And M. Calonne, who had before him a multiplicity of political objects, among which was a New Edict for the augmentation of the Poll Tax, already ſo much reprobated, feared that the office of enregiſtering would be refuſed, in this inſtance, as in others, eſpecially when it was ſo evident that the circumſtances of the Nation called for the retrenchment of public expences, and not for an increaſe of public burthens.

that the *Ordonnance* before them is really the will of the King; and then proceed to make remonſtrances againſt it: ſometimes the King defers to theſe; or, if he is reſolved to put an end to all oppoſition, he comes in perſon to the *Parliament*, there holds what they call a *Lit de Juſtice*, declares that the *Ordonnance* before them is actually his Will, and orders the proper Officer to regiſter it."—De Lolme.

Such were the chief circumſtances of France in 1786; and her proſpects at the commencement of the next year were more ſad and gloomy. The extreme ſcarcity and dearneſs of proviſions, and of every neceſſary article of life, rendered the people highly diſcontented with their ſituation, and the meaſures of the Court tended neither to diminiſh their ſufferings, nor to ſoothe the awakened emotions of reſentment. The Notables were aſſembled, for the purpoſe, according to M. de Calonne, of reſcuing the Nation, not by new taxes, but by œconomy: and a variety of objects, ſome of them important, were pointed out by the King for their deliberation. It ſhortly appeared, however, that the real end of this convocation was only to force thoſe meaſures, which the ſpirit of the Parliaments could not ſuffer to be carried according to cuſtomary uſages. But whether their diſſent to many of the queſtions propoſed had excited diſguſt, or whether they had agreed to ſo much as might anſwer the original purpoſe of the meaſure; the Aſſembly was ſhortly afterwards thanked and diſmiſſed by the King, without having gone through half of their intended buſineſs. It was immediately previous to that event that Mirabeau was forced to fly, in order to avoid the effect of a Lettre de Cachet; and that M. Calonne, having been diſgraced, received his diſmiſſion, and was exiled to his eſtate at Annonville. The Parliament of Paris were ordered

ordered, by the King, to enregiſter certain Edicts agreed on by the Notables, to which requiſition they conſented, except with regard to one for eſtabliſhing a duty on ſtamped paper, which not only met with ſtrong oppoſition, but produced a remonſtrance addreſſed to his Majeſty. The Parliaments of Bourdeaux and Rouen were no leſs refractory on the ſubject of another of the Edicts, relating to the exportation of Corn. To the remonſtrance of the Parliament of Paris the anſwers were contemptuous and laconick, and therefore the Members remonſtrated again, and abſolutely declared it as their opinion, that his Majeſty ought to yield to the general wiſh of the Nation, and reſcue the public affairs from ruin, by convening the STATES GENERAL. The Parliament was immediately ſummoned to Verſailles, where the King held a Bed of Juſtice; at which, having expreſſed his diſapprobation of their conduct, he ordered the Edict and Declaration for a ſtamp-duty and land-tax to be tranſcribed on their regiſters, which was done accordingly. The next day the Chambers aſſembled, and reſolved the regiſtering to be null and void. Some reforms were about this time began in the King's houſehold; and the Parliament ſhortly afterwards iſſued an edict, giving the force of law to the ſtamp-duty and land-tax; but repealing another impoſt. On this they were baniſhed to Troyes; but the conveyance of the Members

from their own houſes, was ſo ſudden and ſecret, and the meaſure itſelf ſo unjuſt, as greatly to exaſperate the people. Government were alarmed at the public feelings, and, Parliament being recalled, the ſeat of Juſtice was again transferred to Paris. New arrangments were made in the Miniſtry, from a thorough ſenſe of the great change which was becoming more and more evident, in popular opinion, from the former ſervility of national character to ſentiments of manly independence. His Majeſty, according to the determination of Council, met his Parliament, and carried with him two Edicts to be regiſtered: one, concerning a Loan; the other, relative to the re-eſtabliſhment of the Proteſtants in their ancient civil rights. Nay, ſo far did this conciliating ſpirit extend, that permiſſion was given for them to deliver their ſentiments without reſtraint. A warm debate accordingly took place, in the courſe of which his Majeſty not having been uſed perhaps to warm debates, and thinking that he had ſuffered this to laſt long enough, felt himſelf fatigued, and, riſing, ordered the Edict for the Loan to be enregiſtered. The Duke of Orleans proteſted againſt the meaſure; but his royal Brother perſiſted in his order, enforced the regiſtering of the Edict, and quitted the Aſſembly. This was, no doubt, concluding with violence, a buſineſs, which had commenced with candour; and in order that the cataſtrophe might not prove incomplete, the Duke of Orleans was

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the next day exiled, and two other Members who had objected to the enregiſtering were committed to priſon. The Parliament, therefore, having in vain ſent a deputation to his Majeſty with a petition in favour of their baniſhed and impriſoned Members, declared the reſolution entered on their books to be expunged, and met to deliberate on the Edict in favour of the Proteſtants. Nothing on this ſubject, however, was determined, and they again attempted to obtain the return of the three exiles by another remonſtrance, declaring, that what they required was not a matter of favour, but their *right*. His Majeſty, as may be ſuppoſed, expreſſed ſtrong diſpleaſure at theſe proceedings.

The Parliament of Paris ſent another Remonſtrance to the King, on the ſubject of their exiles, the Proteſtant eſtabliſhment and Lettres de Cachet. * Receiving a peremptory refuſal on the firſt head, they held out againſt regiſtering the Edict in favour of the Proteſtants, till, with the

* It is impoſſible to read the events which led to the French Revolution, without recollecting the ſpeculation of Blackſtone on the ſubject. "That the abſolute power, ſays this great man, "claimed and exerciſed by a neighbouring nation, is more tole-"rable than that of the eaſtern empires, is in a great meaſure "owing to their having veſted the judicial power in their Parlia-"ments, a body ſeparate and diſtinct from both the legiſlative "and executive: and, *if ever that nation recovers its former liberty,* "*it will owe it to the efforts of thoſe Aſſemblies.*" BLACKSTONE'S COM. Book 1, Chap 7.

extenſion

extenſion of religious freedom, they could obtain a mitigation of civil ſlavery by annihilating that moſt diſgraceful power of remorſeleſs tyranny, the iſſuing of *Lettres de Cachet*. The Parliament of Rouen at this time remonſtrated againſt paying a tax, called the *twentieths*, and declared it impoſſible, that they ſhould conſent to any Bill but by the conſent of the people lawfully aſſembled. The Proteſtant Edict, however, at length, after ſome ſtruggle, paſſed in the Parliament of Paris; but without any conceſſion to their other requeſt, for *Lettres de Cachet* were almoſt immediately afterwards iſſued againſt two Members of the Parliament of Grenoble (both advanced in years, and greatly reſpected) for having expreſſed their opinions with more frankneſs than prudence. This excited no gentle murmurs in Dauphiny; and the diſcontents in the province of Bourdeaux were ſo alarming, that troops were ſent to quell the diſturbances. The Duke of Orleans was thought proper to be recalled: but, with that wavering irreſolution which marks a feeble and inconſiſtent mind, the King at the ſame time held a Bed of Juſtice, in which he aboliſhed the power of the Parliaments, except ſo far as regarded their mere judicial capacity. The eloquence of M. d'Epreſmenil in reſiſting the influence of the Court had endangered his life; and though he avoided aſſaſſination by eſcaping through the croud in diſguiſe, during the tumult which theſe meaſures excited,

cited, even the ſeat of juſtice did not the next day prove a ſanctuary from official violence: he and another Member were taken from thence by virtue of two Lettres de Cachet, and carried off into immediate exile, in the ſight of the populace.

The general ferment excited among the people, the diſtreſſed and ruinous ſtate of the finances, the univerſal execration of the oppreſſions interweaved in the texture of the French Monarchy, the impoſſibility, under the the difficult circumſtances of the caſe, of conducting the public affairs according to the ſyſtem of the eſtabliſhed government, rendered it evident to all parties, that the Nation could be ſaved only by a change of its political Conſtitution. The great object of Court policy, therefore, was, to prevent the inſtitution of a liberal government, in which the people would enjoy their juſt rights in the exerciſe of the important duties of legiſlation. In order to effect this purpoſe, the King held a Bed of Juſtice, and, having taken from the Provincial Parliaments the power of enrolling Edicts, ſtated, that, in a great kingdom, it was neceſſary there ſhould be one Monarch, one Syſtem of Laws, and one Court for enregiſtering and enrolling thoſe laws; and declared his determination in favour of the revival of a Supreme Court to be inveſted with thoſe powers, formerly called, *La Cour Pleniere.* The idea of ſuch a Court, which

was

was formerly nothing more than a ſplendid Ariſtocracy, a gaudy veil for concealed tyranny, excited general alarm; and the Grand Aſſembly of Parliament met the next day, and repreſented to his Majeſty, that their ſilence in his preſence, was not to be conſidered as an acquieſcence, but that, on the contrary, they wholly diſclaimed taking any part in the ſittings of the Court! Several of the Nobles, likewiſe, men of ample fortunes, and of the firſt families in the kingdom, were diſintereſted enough to follow their example. The Parliament was again convened; but his Majeſty giving them to underſtand, that he perſiſted in his determination, they met in the evening at Verſailles, and delivered in a Memorial, proteſting againſt ſuch arbitrary proceedings; and the conſequence of this ſtep was, that the guards were inſtantly ſummoned to protect the Palais, that ſacred manſion of the laws, round which the populace walked, and expreſſed, by the eloquence of ſolemn ſilence, the grief which they felt for the treatment of their Magiſtrates, and the manly reſentment which was brooding in their mind, and which afterwards ſerved, perhaps, as the great ſtimulative to bring their political principles into action.

The people in other parts of the kingdom, hurried on by the madneſs of their paſſions, proceeded even to acts of violence. The Count

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de Perigord was expelled the City of Toulouſe, for attempting to enforce the King's commands; and a great part of Brittany, and of ſeveral other provinces, were in open rebellion. The Members of the Parliament of Rouen, confined in their houſes for having proteſted againſt the invaſion of their rights, at laſt ſubmit to take their ſeats in the new-projected Court, but are afterwards exiled for declaring infamous all ſuch as ſhall accept a place in that tribunal: and thoſe of Paris, Grenoble, Bourdeaux, &c. continue without abatement their vigorous oppoſition. Even the Clergy, in their triennial Aſſembly, having remonſtrated concerning the impoſſibility of contributing a ſum which had been exacted of them, terminated their Memorial, by requeſting the King to convoke the States General; and they obtained for anſwer, that, as ſoon as convenience would allow, they ſhould be convoked.

A negociation, therefore, was pretended to be ſet on foot to form a new Adminiſtration: but it ſhortly appeared, that the object of this meaſure was merely to gain time, and appeaſe the popular diſcontents. The attempt was vain; heſe diſcontents increaſed; the cauſe of the No-les of Brittany, whoſe remonſtrance produced heir impriſonment in the Baſtile, was attempted be revenged by the people on the Intendant of [illegible] who ſaved his life by flight; and

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the reſiſtance in Dauphiny was more determined than ever. Additional conciliatory meaſures were accordingly adopted by the King, who ſuſpended the re-eſtabliſhment of the Cour Pleniere, and again promiſed that the States General ſhould be aſſembled. A complete change of Miniſtry enſued ;* and, notwithſtanding the deplorable ſcarcity of proviſions, the minds of the people were elevated with ſome degree of ſatisfaction, in hopes of likewiſe experiencing a change of meaſures. After ſome ineffectual attempts, therefore, to fruſtrate the meaſure, the Notables were aſſembled, for the purpoſe of determining on the mode of convoking the States, and decided on that according to which they were convened in 1614, when their numbers were in equal proportion, and they voted in different orders. It was, however, finally agreed, that they ſhould conſiſt of twelve hundred Members; 600 of whom were to be choſen by the Commons, 300 by the Clergy, and 300 by the Ariſtocracy.

M. Necker's report, on the reſtoration of the State, having been adopted, and ſanctioned by a Reſolution of Council, the States General aſſembled, in May, 1789. This Aſſembly had

* The Archbiſhop of Sens was diſmiſſed, and M. Necker placed at the head of affairs.

been

been long wiſhed for by the nation, not in order that the States might ſit in different chambers, and vote as ſeparate orders, but that they might thus enable themſelves to unite, in one grand repreſentative body, for the purpoſe of erecting a government on ſuch principles as they thought moſt calculated to promote general happineſs. To this happineſs the old Conſtitution of the States could have only been pernicious. The patronage which the Nobility neceſſarily enjoyed with regard to Church benefices, muſt have irremediably influenced the Chamber of the Clergy; and the Nobles, nurſed in prejudices againſt the common people, and attracted by nearer ties to Royalty, as the fountain of Honour, had felt equal deference in favour of the Crown; ſo that with the powers of the Clergy, the Nobility, and the King, all combined in one intereſt, and preſſing againſt the paltry ſhare of legiſlation allotted to the Commons, a government would have exiſted like a pyramid with its point undermoſt, a monſtrous monument of ignorance in political architecture, and deſtitute of the ſymmetry with which mixed governments ſhould ever be reared, and which has been ſo often admired in the theory of the Britiſh Conſtitution. On the Convention, therefore, of the States, ſeveral conciliatory meaſures were propoſed for the union of the three Chambers into one, for the purpoſe of deliberating and voting

there in common: but this the Nobility and Clergy refuſed, and claimed to themſelves the right of ſuperior and excluſive privileges. Meſſages conſtantly paſſed from one Chamber to another without effect; and the Commons, anxious to obtain their object, ſuſpended the operation of public buſineſs, by remaining, for a while, in ſilent and alarming inactivity. At length, however, they determined to hold no farther conferences, and, inviting all thoſe of the other Chambers who were favourable to the intereſts of the people, declared themſelves legally conſtituted the REPRESENTATIVES *of the* NATION. It was then decided in the Chamber of the Clergy, that they ſhould verify their powers in common with the third eſtate, and a majority accordingly went and joined them. The ſame ſtep was likewiſe taken by a conſiderable number of the Nobility. To this meaſure, the King did not appear at firſt much averſe, but ſhortly afterwards a Declaration was iſſued, prohibiting the meeting of the States for a few days, and notifying his Majeſty's intention of then going in perſon to hold a Royal Sitting. In conſequence, however, of ſome informality in this proceeding, the Members repaired to the hall at the uſual hour of meeting, and *found the doors locked, and ſurrounded with a guard of ſoldiers.* After a few minutes conſideration on the high road, they adjourned to the Tennis Court at Verſailles, and having

having there paſſed the day in deliberating on this meaſure of the King, engaged themſelves by an oath, never to ſeparate from the National Aſſembly, till they had eſtabliſhed, on ſome ſolid baſis, a Conſtitution for their Country.

The patriotiſm which was animated by this incident, received an infuſion of freſh ſpirit from the high and imperative deciſion of the *Royal Seſſion*. By the declaration of the King, not only was the diſtinction of orders ſanctioned, but thoſe orders were enjoined to vote ſeparately in all great queſtions reſpecting the Conſtitution. The ſuppreſſion of *Lettres de Cachet* was referred to the State, thus conſtituted with ability of reſiſting the national wiſh by permitting their continuance; and the Monarch was the only perſon to whom the good of the people was to be confided. The Aſſembly were therefore ordered to quit the Hall, and attend the next day in their ſeparate Chambers. The Tiers Etat yielded not obedience to this mandate, but after ſome minutes paſſed in mute aſtoniſhment and indignation, motions were propoſed and carried, expreſſive of their determination to perſiſt in their former reſolves, and of their perſonal inviolability. The Commons met again the next day, when the Duke of Orleans joined them with more than forty of the Nobles; men of the firſt families and characters in the country: and two hundred of the Clergy likewiſe

likewiſe attended, who ſubſcribed to the oath, and aſſented to the reſolutions of the Aſſembly.

The arbitrary proceeding of the King, in holding, at ſuch a moment, and with ſo menacing an air, the Royal Seſſion, not only tended to concentrate in one body, all the Members of the three Eſtates, whoſe principles induced them to favour the general wiſhes of the nation, but enraged the populace without doors. Had a ſingle gun been fired at a moment of ſuch tumult, a Civil War muſt inevitably have enſued; but happily the French and Swiſs Guards refuſed to act againſt the Nation. The Guard du Corps declined all ſervice but that of protecting the perſon of the King, and a regiment of Huſſars which was brought to replace them, declared that they would not fire unleſs they ſhould be firſt attacked. The ſame diſpoſition was found in all the troops throughout the kingdom.

In this ſituation of affairs, the King thought it prudent to ſend a Letter to the diſſentient Members of Notables, urging them, without deay, to unite and deliberate with the Clergy and the Commons. The injunction had its effect, and all parties appeared to be happy and contented. But this turned out to be a meaſure calculated to lull the people into a fatal ſecurity; and Paris was ſhortly ſurrounded with Foreign Troops.

Troops. The Aſſembly remonſtrated; but as the King ſtated, that his motive for ſuch conduct, was none other than the deſire of promoting public tranquillity, they were contented, and proceeded to the great work of eſtabliſhing a new Conſtitution. The Court, however, were alarmed, and manifeſted meaſures of determined hoſtility. Miniſtry were diſplaced; a body of Cannoneers were planted round the City; and an immenſe number of mercenaries ſummoned to their vile trade of wholeſale murder. But the ſoldiery participating in the general patriotiſm, and ſtill farther attached to the Nation by an increaſe of pay, which had been recently voted in the Aſſembly, laid down their arms, and declared that they would not fight againſt their fellow citizens. The people, exaſperated, by theſe appearances, at the treachery of their Court, flew to arms: nothing could reſiſt their energy: Broglio and his troops were diſperſed, the Baſtile was attacked and demoliſhed, and the Governor, with others, whoſe conduct on the occaſion had been marked by peculiar baſeneſs, fell a ſacrifice to the vengeance of the multitude.

Louis XVI. [redacted], haſtened to conciliate the affections of the Aſſembly. He deplored the tumults which then diſgraced the capital, declared that he had been miſrepreſented,

ſented, and proteſted that he wiſhed the ſettlement of the Conſtitution on ſuch principles, as could afford ſatisfaction to all his ſubjects. The Aſſembly, who had ſternly ſaluted him on his entrance, with the words *Vive la Nation!* ſuffered him not to depart without the exclamation of *Vive le Roi!* And they took meaſures to quell the violence of the populace without doors, who had perpetrated ſeveral acts of perſonal cruelty on the moſt odious of their oppreſſors, by proclaiming it criminal to puniſh any man otherwiſe than by Law, and ſtating their intention of ſpeedily forming a tribunal for that purpoſe.

The National Aſſembly now began their important labours, and, inſtead of reſentful perſecutions of their enemies, or arbitrary and bloody proſcriptions, publiſhed a Declaration of the *Rights of Man*, as the ground-work and baſis of all equitable government. They next proceeded gradually to diſſolve the principles and forms of the old Conſtitution, previous to their erection of another; by ſuppreſſing ſeigniorial tribunals, and the exaction of tythes; and aboliſhing the excluſive right of the chace, and the unjuſt claims of primogeniture. The waſt bodies of vagrants from other countries, who had advantaged themſelves of the ſituation of France, in hopes of there experiencing circumſtances more favourable to the gratification of their lazineſs and their crimes, were

were paid to depart, and the Aſſembly having thus more effectually ſecured the tranquillity of the State, cheerfully reſumed their labours. They eſtabliſhed perfect toleration, and decreed their own permanence as a legiſlature, and the King's ſuſpenſive *veto*. At this moment, however, new and unexpected circumſtances aroſe to interrupt their proceedings and diſtract their Councils. The King refuſed his ſanction to the articles of the Conſtitution, and a tumult took place at Verſailles, ariſing from the behaviour of ſome officers of the *Gardes du Corps*, who had given a feaſt to the new regiment of Flanders, in which their Majeſties being preſent, they had torne off and trampled under-foot the National Cockade, and committed ſeveral other enthuſiaſtic acts of equal imprudence. Theſe circumſtances were ſufficient to convince the Aſſembly, that undue means were actively and fatally exerted upon the royal mind, which, if not prevented, muſt inevitably tend to the deſtruction of all their meaſures; and that the public ſafety could only be obtained by ſecuring the King's reſidence in Paris. La Fayette, therefore, at the head of the City Militia, attended by a large body of people of all deſcriptions, proceeded to Verſailles, and perſuaded their Majeſties to ſuffer themſelves to be conducted to the Capital. That ſome accidental outrages ſhould have been committed, by a populace ſo mixed and tumultuous, was to

be expected; but with regard to the main buſineſs of conveying the King and Queen to Paris, I know not that their conduct was diſgraced by any act of perſonal inſult whatever. This object accordingly obtained, the Aſſembly reſumed their important labours. They decreed, that all eccleſiaſtical property was at the diſpoſal of the Nation (on condition of providing, in a ſuitable manner, for the expence of divine worſhip, the ſupport of its Miniſters, and the relief of the poor); they framed a plan of Territorial Diviſion, calculated for the organization of Provincial Aſſemblies: they reſolved on the ſuſpenſion of Provincial Parliaments, and an undiſguiſed publication of the Penſion Liſt: they formed ſeveral important Financial Regulations, and gradually reared that Conſtitution, which I may ſafely aſſert, however imperfect in ſome parts, to be the moſt ſimple, uſeful, and honeſt government, that under the peculiar difficulties of the moment, the integrity of man could poſſibly have conſtructed. The extreme folly of the attempt of their Majeſties to fly the kingdom, and rather to deluge their country in blood, than allow it to enjoy the bleſſings of a free government—an attempt that was ſo unexpectedly fruſtrated—neither checked their zeal, nor ſtimulated their reſentment. The Conſtitution was formed and preſented to the King. The

Monarch

Monarch accepted it, and ratified his acceptance by a ſacred and public Oath to maintain it inviolable: and the Aſſembly diſſolved, to give way to their ſucceſſors, crowned with the applauſe of millions, and crowned, indeed, with that reward, which is ſtill more glorious than the applauſe of millions,—the manly conſciouſneſs of having dedicated two years of almoſt unremitted labour, to the diffuſion of knowledge, dignity, and happineſs, among ſo great a portion of mankind.

But wiſhing you to draw your own concluſions from theſe events, I will treſpaſs for the preſent no longer on your attention, and ſhall make ſuch farther obſervations as occur to me on the ſubject in my next.

I remain, dear Sir, &c.

POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE, &c.

LETTER IV.

Exultation at the triumph of Liberty in France—View of Edmund Burke's conduct—Remarks on the chief of his objections—A ſpeculative Atheiſt may be a man of pure morals—On the literary defenders of the French Revolution—Moral beauties of the New Conſtitution—Reflections on the events of the tenth of Auguſt, National Convention, &c.

SIR,

YOU ſeem ſatisfied with the *accuracy* of my review of the Revolution in France—ſo far as accuracy can be expected in a review ſo rapid—but think that I have not been equally *impartial*; and therefore you reſiſt my claims to the character of a juſt Hiſtorian. I fear that I deſerve your cenſure, and confeſs, that, with whatever intentions of impartiality I might have began my narrative, I could not avoid feeling occaſionally intereſted in the courſe of the relation, and applying partial epithets to thoſe circumſtances which appeared to convey examples of uncommon

uncommon diſintereſtedneſs, and to originate in principles of unaffected patriotiſm. Some little colouring of praiſe has indeed been beſtowed where facts appeared really to demand it; but though I may have thus far evinced a mind not free from partiality, I have by no means proved unfaithful or untrue in the ſtatement of the facts themſelves. Every man *muſt* be affected with ſtrong feelings of one ſort or another, who contemplates ſo ſudden and complete a change in the manners and cuſtoms of the French; and I think that I ought not to be cenſured when I acknowledge myſelf unable to regard ſuch an event without enthuſiaſm. I boaſt not nerves of iron. Twenty-five millions of human beings, whom we have long been in the habit of deſpiſing as the patient ſlaves of the moſt ſhameful tyranny and oppreſſion, are awakened by peculiar circumſtances to a ſenſe of their humiliated ſituation, and determine to be free: they aſſert their rights, and they are free. Can I, with indifference, behold ſo vaſt a portion of mankind, after having been degraded to the moſt abject ſtate of brutal ſervitude, reſtored to their proper degree in ſociety, as moral beings? Can I, without exultation, reflect, that one of thoſe countries, in which religious intolerance has frequently rioted in blood, and political villainy triumphed over her miſerable victims, ſhould at laſt be redeemed from error, and that the light of reaſon ſhould have

have diſperſed all the darkneſs and the horrors of Bigotry and Deſpotiſm?

That ſuch an event ſhould meet with enemies in this country, was naturally to be expected. It was to be expected that thoſe men who derive any advantages from the exiſtence of abuſes in our own ſyſtem of political eſtabliſhment, would raiſe a clamour againſt a Revolution which unhinged every prejudice that ſanctions what is wrong, by directing the public attention to what is right, in the principles or practice of government. But it certainly never was expected, that the admirers of the late meaſures in France would meet their vehement antagoniſt in EDMUND BURKE. It was not expected, that the warm champion of political liberty would deſert his cauſe, and act in hoſtility to his former principles, at the moment when that liberty became more honeſtly aſſerted, not in "bold ſwelling phraſes," but in manly actions. It was not expected that *he*, who to his other titles of intellectual merit, affected to add that of the liberal and enlightened Philoſopher, would deplore as calamitous, an event which tended to extirpate a vicious government, the foundation of almoſt every other vice and miſery, and ſecured the happineſs of millions, by ſubſtituting in their favour a Conſtitution founded on the ſentiments of freedom

dom and humanity. But in men who are verſed and hackneyed in the arts of party and parliamentary intrigue, we are not to look for much political conſiſtency: and Edmund Burke, by his declamatory pamphlet on the French Revolution, has added to the number of lamentable examples, which afford triumph to the envious, and conſolation to the ſtupid; by proving to what vile purpoſes great and ſhewy endowments are too frequently exerted, and by bringing down to the level of public contempt, a character rendered conſpicuous by knowledge the moſt extenſive, and abilities the moſt ſplendid.

The end of Mr. Burke's pamphlet was to render the ſubject of the French Revolution and its fundamental principles, odious to the people of this country. For the accompliſhment of this purpoſe no artifice, no ſophiſtry, no miſrepreſentation, has been uneſſayed. All is complaint, outcry and invective. He begins with ridiculing the Revolution Club, and the character and conduct of the late Dr. Price: he proceeds to explain the principles of the Britiſh Conſtitution, and attempts to prove that the people of this country never were ſuppoſed to have any right to change their government. The French, he declares, poſſeſſed the elements of a good Conſtitution in their old States: the Parliament of Paris have deceived the King, and all is anarchy and confuſion.

confuſion. "France indeed affords an afflicting ſpectacle: Its laws overturned; its tribunals ſubverted; induſtry without vigour; commerce expiring; the revenue unpaid, yet the people impoveriſhed." The inferior clergy are then attacked, as men who regard all property with envy; the nobles who joined the revolutioniſts are men, who ſacrifice ideas of dignity to the vile ambition of working with ignoble means for the ſubverſion of Monarchy; and thoſe great and glorious luminaries of literature and ſcience, who have ſo highly contributed to adorn and enlighten the ſeventeenth century, are a literary cabal, who have conſpired the deſtruction of all juſt government and the abolition of Chriſtianity. The robbery of the Church is next inveighed againſt; the deceit of the repreſentatives of the States General, who fraudulently pretended to wiſh for a reform and not a revolution; the diſſolution of the Parliament and the corruption of the ſoldiery. The remainder of the book is made up of a complex account of the French Finances.—Such is the ſubſtance of Mr. Burke's celebrated pamphlet, in which he has diſplayed all the beauties of his luxuriant imagination, but in the peruſal of which the attention is cloyed by too uniform an appearance of gaudy grandeur, at the expence of clearneſs and method. His language is ſwelling and declamatory; but, loaded with metaphor, it is frequently more turgid

turgid than ſublime, and his reaſoning participates rather of the nature of ſophiſtry than of fair and honeſt argument. There is a juſt dignity in many of his moral ſentiments, yet even this excellence is to be lamented, as it ſerves only to render the deſpotic principles of the book more impoſing and dangerous. Too much vehemence of paſſion prevails throughout: and where a man pays no regard to moderation in his ſtrictures, we have reaſon to fear that he will pay none to juſtice. That, in the courſe of the French Revolution, ſome circumſtances might have occurred which irreſiſtibly call for cenſure, no impartial man can deny; but Mr. Burke, in his application of degrading epithets, regards no bounds of diſcrimination and decency. All, with him, has been factious, baſe, impious, villainous, deteſtable: and admitting no ſhades of guilt, every character, every incident, connected in the chain of cauſes and effects producing and involving this great event, muſt fall before him, overwhelmed by the raging torrent of his frothy declamation. Our prejudices and feelings are conſtantly appealed to, rather than our underſtandings: And it is not indeed uncandid to aſſert, that the pamphlet in queſtion ought rather to be conſidered as a fine piece of declamatory compoſition and impaſſioned eloquence, than as the uſeful vehicle of ſolid inſtruction, and that it will long exiſt as a monument of its au-

thor's weakneſs of judgment and brilliancy of genius.

Mr. Burke's book, however, is ſo well known, that at this time it is almoſt uſeleſs to attempt to give you even a general idea of its merits; and, after the various and able replies that it has called forth, for me to attempt an anſwer to its contents would perhaps appear preſumptuous and idle. Yet ſtill, though I would wiſh to avoid ſuch an imputation, I cannot paſs by the ſubject without troubling you with a few remarks. Mr. Burke ſays, that the French had the elements of a good conſtitution in their old States: but they certainly had *not* the elements of ſuch a Conſtitution in thoſe States, becauſe the Clergy, inſtead of operating as an order in balance againſt the other orders—according to that counteracting principle which is generally conſidered as eſſential in mixed governments—would naturally be thrown into the ſcale of Monarchical and Ariſtocratical influence, in conſequence of owing their patronage to the Crown and the Ariſtocracy of the country;—an event which would not be more prejudicial to the Tiers Etat, than degrading to the dignity of the Clergy themſelves. We are next told, with much invective, that the Parliament of Paris deceived the King. Without inſiſting on the truth of the aſſurances of that parliament, I cannot help lamenting, that Mr. Burke's deteſtation of inſincerity ſhould be

of

of ſo partial a nature, as to induce him thus bitterly to notice one inſtance of the Parliament having deceived the King, and to paſs by the many inſtances in which the King deceived the People. Another example of the diſingenuouſneſs of this great writer, occurs in the artful manner in which he faſtens the ſtigma, of ſuch acts of violence as were committed by the Mob, on the National Aſſembly. When did a Revolution of ſuch conſequence take place,* in which ſo little blood was ſhed as in that of France? A Revolution is naturally ſuppoſed to involve in it extreme violence: and in the preſent caſe, ſome inſtances occur of acts of great and atrocious cruelty; yet theſe acts, few indeed in number, were committed by an ignorant rabble, whom, in the moment of revolt, it was impoſſible to reſtrain, and who owed their barbarity to the inhuman executions they had been accuſtomed to behold, and to the principles which they had imbibed under the tyranny and oppreſſion of the former government. The conduct of the National Aſſembly, though uniformly determined, was equally diſtinguiſhed by mildneſs, equanimity, and mercy. Mr. Burke's violent declaration that the laws were overturned, and the tribunals ſubverted, could have as little effect with

* When I ſay this, I do not include the ſhocking events of the tenth of Auguſt. Thoſe events formed a ſecond revolution, and took place at three years diſtance from the former.

thinking minds, as the remainder of the ſame period, in which he diſplays the poverty of the revenue and of the people. The ſeigniorial and other tribunals, and the laws of the old Monarchy, were certainly aboliſhed; but they were aboliſhed only, as Mr. Burke well knew, for the purpoſe of eſtabliſhing in their place the ſimple and unincumbered principles of juſtice, and the equitable proceſs of Trial by Jury. The diſſolution of Provincial Parliaments was the neceſſary effect of ſubſtituting other Courts of Juſtice, and of the exiſtence of the National Aſſembly.—Nor is it any good argument in favour of the old ſyſtem to ſay, that the Revolution did not, like a Magician's wand, baniſh, in a moment, from the face of the country, that poverty and diſtreſs in which the revenue and the people were involved: All that the revolution could effect, was to reduce the unneceſſary expences, and to put the public affairs in ſuch a train that the nation ſhould, at laſt, recover from her indigence.

The charge againſt the repreſentatives of the States General, for having pretended to wiſh for a *Reform*, not a Revolution, may be juſt; and if ſo, it was diſingenuous to aſſert one thing, when they meant to execute another: but there is much more reaſon to believe it unjuſt, ſince, however ſome perſons might avow an intention of correcting the vices of the State by the mild meaſure of reform,

reform, we can ſcarcely ſuſpect it poſſible that the nation in general, groaning under a government ſo vile in principle as their old Monarchy, could conceal their conviction of the neceſſity of a thorough Revolution. The corruption of the Soldiery, by raiſing their pay, I cannot defend on any other grounds than by ſaying, that, critically ſituated as the Aſſembly then were, and avowedly perſecuted by the Miniſtry, they were reduced to the neceſſity of oppoſing this ſtroke of well-timed policy, to the ſecret and dangerous machinations of their opponents.

But the grievances which chiefly excite the horror of Mr. Burke, are, it ſeems, the annihilation of Titles, and the diſpoſal of Church Property. With regard to the firſt of theſe, the Nobles in general had not only rendered their order deteſtable by arrogance and injuſtice, but had proved by their claim of excluſive privileges, at the meeting of the States, and by their oſtentation of contempt towards the *Tiers Etat*, that no liberal form of government *could* be carried on while titles were ſuffered to exiſt. If we conſider the queſtion upon general grounds, nothing will be more evident, than that as titles derive their value only from public opinion, when they are once conſidered by the people as frivolous and uſeleſs, they really become ſo, and degrade rather than dignify thoſe who bear them. It is ſufficient, indeed,

indeed, to ſay, that they were deemed, on the preſent occaſion, incompatible with the nature of that free State which the French were about to eſtabliſh; and whatever might be the eagerneſs of the Ariſtocracy at large to continue the fooliſh finery of ſuch diſtinctions, we ſee that many of the moſt ancient and noble families in the kingdom were the firſt to relinquiſh them, and to glory in coinciding with the good ſenſe of the Nation.

Whatever energy Mr. Burke may have exerted for the purpoſe of rendering the diſpoſal of Church Property an object of general execration, it certainly could not have been expected, at the time of a complete National Revolution, when every other part of the old ſyſtem was ſo eſſentially changed, that the Church alone would be exempted from the general lot. The neceſſity of a more equal diſtribution of ſalary, and the univerſal toleration held out by France to all religions, peculiarly demanded a new conſtitution of her own Church eſtabliſhment; and ſituated as ſhe then was, ſhe could ill afford that, while her people was impoveriſhed, a race of luxurious Eccleſiaſticks * ſhould prey upon her vitals. She therefore

* I do not believe, that this expreſſion will be conſidered as unjuſt, by thoſe who properly conſider the general ſtate of the French Church before the Revolution. The inferior orders of the

therefore found it neceſſary to confiſcate the Church Property, or rather, ſhe withdrew into her own hands the *emoluments annexed to the* OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS *of the eſtabliſhed religion*; and no rational being can ſeriouſly ſuppoſe that ſhe had not a right to do this, and that the means by which the State paid the Clergy to preach the doctrines of its eſtabliſhed religion, were actually the perſonal property of the individuals ſo paid. The neceſſity of ſo violent a meaſure may be juſtly lamented; but let us not forget that all thoſe, who would otherwiſe have been immediate ſufferers, were allowed an honourable compenſation. More could not have been done in favour of the individuals who were affected by the

the Clergy, who induſtriouſly performed the duties of their profeſſion, and — ſtarved, are certainly to be exempted from the imputation of deſerving ſo harſh an epithet. *Their* ſituation, I think, was conſiderably amended by the Revolution: and perhaps, the change has produced a greater ſum of good, than of inconvenience, to the whole order. A writer on the ſubject ſays, that by the decree of the Conſtituent Aſſembly, the ſalary of the pooreſt Member of the Church was not ſuffered to be leſs than 50l. *per annum*, and that of the richeſt, not more than 4000l. Let us add to this act of general juſtice, the power of contracting marriage, the greateſt ſocial happineſs of life, which was before withheld; and I think the condition of the French Clergy has been on the whole much meliorated by the change of national affairs.—In making theſe obſervations, I certainly am ſpeaking without any reference to thoſe barbarous proſcriptions which took place in the courſe of Auguſt and September laſt, by which ſuch numbers of unfortunate men were obliged to fly their country.

change;

change; and to have attempted leſs, I am ready to allow, had been the extreme of narrowneſs, cruelty, and injuſtice.

Mr. Burke repeatedly brands the National Aſſembly with the epithet of *Atheiſts*, and he knows, that when he does ſo, he is irreſiſtibly appealing to the paſſions of the multitude, who decide more from impulſe than reflexion, and are animated by fanaticiſm in proportion to their ignorance. How far the philoſophical infidelity of ſeveral Members of that Aſſembly may have extended, I cannot determine; but it is evident, that ſuch infidelity had thriven with the greateſt luxuriance under the bigotry of their former inſtructors. If the truth of any article of faith were as demonſtrable as a problem of Euclid, all mankind would be of one religious profeſſion; but ſince this is not the caſe, we ought to adopt ſuch a ſyſtem for our own creed as beſt ſatisfies our conſcience, but have no right whatever to impeach the character of others, becauſe they happen to have imbibed different opinions. This rational ground of toleration, applies not only from ſect to ſect, but ought to extend to infidels, and even to Atheiſts—I mean not blaſphemers nor profligate, ſhallow men, who, to calm their own conſciences, pretend to laugh at a principle which would otherwiſe alarm them, but Speculative Atheiſts—whoſe opinions, ſo far as they appear erroneous, may juſtly be deplored

deplored as a misfortune, but ought not to be branded as a crime. If I aſk ninety-nine men out of an hundred, what is their opinion of ſpeculative Atheiſm? they will either ridicule it as the effect of idiotiſm, or ſpeak of it with abhorrence: yet the fact is, that ſpeculative Atheiſts have generally been ſtudious, retired, and inoffenſive men, whoſe minds, elevated above the rank of common intellect, have purſued enquiries into ſubjects too grand for the limited ſphere of human faculties to embrace, and, involved in metaphyſical intricacies which mortals cannot ſolve, have ended in a diſbelief of the exiſtence of God, the original cauſe of all things. Puzzled by the extreme difficulty of conceiving how any Cauſe can poſſibly have been ſelf-exiſtent, and yet forced to admit the neceſſity of ſome ſuch principle, or to re-trace cauſes to *their* cauſes without end, they have adopted Nature as their ſelf-exiſtent ſubject, and imagined this hypotheſis to poſſeſs moſt truth, becauſe poſſeſſing moſt ſimplicity. They have conceived matter to act by its own energy; that its atoms, whirled about in perpetual motion, having paſſed through almoſt all poſſible changes and modes of exiſtence, fell at laſt into the preſent regular diſtribution of principles and harmony of parts; that as right principles fix and cement the fabric they produce, the ſyſtem has endured for ſome thouſand years, and may endure for ever; that

the power of vegetation and production, are properties inherent in matter; and that the world is too full of evil and misery not to render it more reconcileable to believe the eternity of matter, than the existence of a God who can suffer mankind to be so unhappy. Such opinions must doubtless preclude the mental pleasure arising from the contemplation, in his works, of a Supreme Intelligence, the source of truth and goodness, the Universal Parent of all animated Beings: But such opinions are by no means incompatible with pure intentions, and a strict discharge of the duties of life. Those who have imbibed them, may conceive that there is a wide difference between professing such a speculative system, and producing practical mischief by the commission of positive evil; they may hold sacred the moral obligations of mankind, and believe that, as the rectitude of physical principles can alone maintain the existence of Nature, so is the rectitude of moral principles necessary to secure their own well-being and the happiness of society. The examples indeed of Spinoza, Hobbes, Bayle, and Hume, prove that it is possible for speculative Atheists to be men of peculiar innocence of manners, and integrity of conduct. *

If

* When I say that a speculative Atheist may be a good man, I do not mean to compliment the system of speculative Atheism, but

If the National Conſtituent Aſſembly of France, however, *were* Atheiſts, I ſee not how their infidelity could have any connexion with the propriety of their opinions on the principles of government. But I doubt the fact; and deem it abſurd to ſuppoſe, for a moment, that an Aſſembly, or the majority of an Aſſembly, conſiſting of Deputies freely choſen from ſo large a Nation as France, ſhould happen to be made up of Atheiſts! If one or two Members have avowed ſuch unqualified infidelity, their avowal was merely the conſequence of the freedom allowed by the New Conſtitution to the declaration of ſpeculative opinions, and is infinitely more deſirable than that hypocriſy with which their ſentiments would have been veiled, while they operated with greater ſecrecy in the production of converts, under the old organization of the State. But we cannot expect that

but merely to write the truth, ſuch as it appears from an unprejudiced view of facts. I know that it is the cuſtom of many well-meaning perſons to brand Atheiſts as monſters of wickedneſs; and they think that, by doing ſo, they ſerve the intereſts of religion. But all falſehood defeats its own end: And the conſequence of this conduct is, that thoſe who from their youth perhaps have been habituated to ſuch a doctrine, may be afterwards drawn, by ſome of the neceſſary connexions of life, into the company or acquaintance of a philoſophical infidel, and learning that his *morals*, both in theory and practice, are good, they may from the impulſe of indignation, at the diſcovery of one falſehood, reject the whole ſyſtem of religion, which it was intended to fortify, as a tiſſue of falſehoods alſo.

Mr. Burke will very readily withdraw a charge which he finds ſo convenient to his purpoſe: and we ſhall be again told, that the object of the Aſſembly was nothing leſs than the total abolition of Chriſtianity. Yet a ſmall degree of conſideration will prove the folly and falſehood of this ſuppoſition: the people at large would not bear ſuch a violation of their natural feelings,—ſo grievous a tyranny upon their minds. The National Aſſembly, therefore, if juſt men, would not think of hazarding an experiment which by exciting popular indignation muſt tend to the ſubverſion of their favourite principles; and if unjuſt, their very profligacy had rendered them cautious of an act that muſt have opened the eyes of the people, and diſabled them from impoſing any longer on their good opinion. That perfect toleration of religious ſentiments, and freedom of enquiry, which they have ſo liberally ſanctioned, *muſt* end in the univerſal reception of eternal Truth: this is the final reſult of all liberal and continued diſcuſſions; and it is paying a poor compliment to Chriſtianity, indeed, (the moſt benignant and pure of any of the numerous religions upon the earth) to ſuppoſe that this reſult can poſſibly prove inimical to its intereſts and its exiſtence.

Thus are the objections which have been formed againſt the French Revolution, trifling indeed,

indeed, when individually conſidered; but heaped together, by the able induſtry of Mr. Burke, they riſe to mountainous importance, and ſtrike the ſuperficial obſerver with amazement and terror. Inſecure in their property and perſons, ſubject to the capricious determination of arbitrary power, liable, on every occaſion of private reſentment, to be rendered the victims of the hatred of thoſe whoſe rank in life enabled them to take advantage of the cruel arts of Court policy, the bulk of the French Nation, as beings ſuſceptible of pain and pleaſure, ſurely had ample reaſon to be diſſatisfied with the effects of their former Government:—as rational beings, they might well abhor the principles of that ſyſtem (when once their minds were induced ſincerely to reflect on the ſubject) which could produce ſuch practical evils. The grand queſtion, therefore, on which the juſtice or injuſtice of their Revolution muſt be decided, is this: *Have the people of any country a right to change their form of Government?* And to this queſtion, I think, every man, not ſuperſtitiouſly attached to forms, becauſe they have been long eſtabliſhed, nor tinctured by a ſordid principle of ſelfiſhneſs, becauſe he derives ſome contemptible excluſive benefit from them, will anſwer poſitively in the affirmative. In order to juſtify this aſſertion, it does not appear neceſſary to enter into the origin of Governments, after the example of the greater part

of

of thoſe who maintain the principle for which I contend: both becauſe I think their concluſion erroneous, and becauſe I conceive every declaration on the ſubject to be merely conjectural; ſocieties having been too barbarous and unenlightened when Governments were firſt eſtabliſhed, to be able to tranſmit pure and regular records of ſuch eſtabliſhment to their poſterity.—It ſeems erroneous, however, on the ground of probability only, to ſuppoſe that all Government was originally founded on "a compact between the governors and the governed;" for that principle implies that the governors, previous to their exiſtence in that character, poſſeſſed a power ſeparate and diſtinct from that of ſociety, by which they were enabled to enter into a contract, and to become a party, whoſe conſent muſt be neceſſary to diſſolve the relation that ſubſiſts between them. The different forms of Governments, I conceive, in the early ages of the world, to have been chiefly produced by fortuitous cauſes. The natives of one region, influenced by the ſmall extent of territory or numbers, or dreading the loſs of their freedom from the moleſtation of hoſtile neighbours, or ſome other circumſtance, might chooſe to regulate their affairs by meeting on terms of general equality, and thus conſtitute a DEMOCRATIC form of Government. Thoſe of *another* place, might yield to the Councils of a ſelect number, who

who were deemed beſt able to guide them, and who, either elected to, or aſſuming, that power to which perhaps their age, experience, or other venerable or uſeful qualities might beſt entitle them, became, in the higheſt ſenſe of the word, an ARISTOCRACY. Thoſe of *another*, whoſe ſituation forced them frequently into hoſtile encounters with ſurrounding nations, might chooſe that man as their Ruler in Peace, whoſe perſonal proweſs and ſpirit had moſt frequently led them on to ſucceſs in War; or he might himſelf uſurp the ſupreme power; and hence perhaps a MONARCHY aroſe. And in other countries, which had undergone the devaſtations of deluges or earthquakes, the alarm excited in the minds of the remnant that ſurvived theſe natural revolutions, might induce a few artful men to take advantage of the general weakneſs, and, pretending to hold ſecret intercourſe with God, to exalt themſelves to the ſolemn office of Miniſters of the divine will, and thus eſtabliſh a THEOCRACY.—It is, therefore, impoſſible even from conjecture to adduce, as a fact, the exiſtence of any particular principle, concerning the origin of Government, which can be applied to the queſtion of *Government in general*; and we have no reaſon to affirm, that ſyſtems of civil regulation actually *were* at firſt founded either on mutual compact between the governors and the governed, or on popular agreement. But though we cannot

not juſtly affirm that ſuch principle has formerly exiſted, we may fairly conclude that the principle of popular agreement *ought* to exiſt; and that all Governments are more or leſs juſt, in proportion to the ſtrength or weakneſs of its prevalence. The object of all honeſt Government is, not the benefit of the few, but of the many; not the perſonal advantage of thoſe who govern, but the happineſs of the Community at large: hence, as the Community at large are the only proper judges of what conduces to their own happineſs, an *honeſt* Government will exiſt on no other baſis than that of popular agreement, and can, therefore, laſt no longer than the duration of that agreement; and when it fails to anſwer the end for which all juſt Government was deſigned, it is not only the *right*, but the *duty* of the People, to change it to ſuch a form as can beſt contribute to their general ſatisfaction. On two principles only can all Government be founded, viz. on force, or on popular agreement. That which exiſts not *with* the popular conſent, exiſts *againſt* the popular conſent, and ſuch Government is a Government of force. All force is uſurpation, and uſurpation is injuſtice. The war againſt injuſtice is the common cauſe of mankind: and willing as we all are to run down an unfortunate individual, who, in his own petty ſphere of action, is miſguided enough to hope for happineſs in the exerciſe

exercise of injustice or vice, by what sacred ties are we not bound to resist that grand comprehensive system of injustice, which, arising from the principles, mingles in the operation, of an oppressive and tyrannous form of civil Administration?

But it is idle to answer, in this desultory manner, the newly-adopted principles which Mr. Burke himself, in his former Writings and Parliamentary Speeches, has confuted with such energy and beauty, that we need only refer to those passages, and, turning to their author, exclaim, in Scripture phrase, "out of thy own mouth, Hypocrite, will I condemn thee!"—Still more needless is it, since he has started a subject of too much magnitude and importance, not to have already called forth the powers of the first literary characters in this country. Hence the opportunity offered to Paine to turn the subject of public grievances from France to this Country, and, with the rude grasp of coarse, but manly, indignation, to tear away the curtain that mysteriously concealed from the public eye, those tricks of State which the public purse has so liberally contributed to support, and to expose to ridicule that Aristocracy which can continue to exist no longer than while it continues to be respected. Hence the exertion of the masterly, but more cultivated, powers of a Macaulay Gra-

ham, and the elegant and claſſic labours of a Mackintoſh. The ableſt pens have indeed been employed, on this occaſion, in vindicating the cauſe of Truth and Liberty. The Biſhop of Llandaff, Dr. Prieſtley, Williams, Holcroft, Rous, Barlow, Boothby, Piggot, and Merry; and as the female ſex, claiming reſpect as much from their talents as their beauty, are among the firſt to admire all that is truly noble and virtuous, we may add the amiable and judicious tributes of eulogium from the pens of Helen Maria Williams, and Mary Woolſtonecraft.—From ſuch a diſcuſſion, the general diffuſion of clear principles of Society and Government may finally be expected: but for the *practical event* of that diſcuſſion, Mr. Burke will have to anſwer to his own conſcience. If the practical event be neither more nor leſs than a rational reform of the Parliamentary Repreſentation of this Country, *he* will merit no thanks for the original intention with which he diſſeminated his vile principles on the affairs of France: if it be a ſcene of turbulence and blood-ſhed, to him in a great meaſure may be referred the cauſe, ſince *he* was the Savage who firſt threw the Hatchet. I ſhould be ſorry to apply any illiberal epithet to the public character of Mr. Burke, who, with all his errors, muſt ever be conſidered as a great man; and who, in his late political conduct, has, I believe, been actuated

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by violent paſſions, and not by views of ſordid ſelfiſhneſs. But, ought violent paſſions to regulate a diſcuſſion of ſuch importance? Ought they to diſgrace a mind of ſuch magnitude? Can we view the effect of thoſe paſſions, in the preſent inſtance, without indignation? Who that bears about him an honeſt mind, can endure that genius ſhould be exerted to enforce deſpotiſm, to ſanction falſehood, and to deſtroy every ſentiment that breathes a love of Liberty? Liberty! without which life itſelf is not worth poſſeſſing. Liberty! the ſource of all that is dignified and noble in human nature. Liberty! for the ſupport of whoſe cauſe every great and good man would bleed and die!

That the Revolution in France ſhould have been attended by any ſcenes of violence and cruelty, muſt be lamented; yet, in the courſe of this whole event, grand as it is, there has not been one-half of the tumult and bloodſhed which was occaſioned amongſt us in the year 1780, in conſequence of a prejudice the moſt contemptible, and without the probability of obtaining any rational object whatever. If we turn to the fair ſide of the picture, and contemplate the advantages ariſing from the event, we ſhall ſee only ſuch as are highly conducive to the happineſs of the people.—*Lettres de Cachet* exiſt no more; the *Baſtile* has been razed to the ground; and pu-

niſhment by *Torture* is aboliſhed. The inferior orders of the people are relieved from the infamous extortion of *Farmers-General*. *Liberty of the Preſs* is eſtabliſhed; freedom granted of *paſſing to and from the Country*; no civil rights denied to ſuch as conſcientiouſly profeſs *Religious Opinions*, different from thoſe preſcribed by the State; and juſtice is impartially adminiſtered in conſequence of the inſtitution of *Trial by Jury*. Inſtead of the fatal ſplendour of the former Government, and the tyrannous diſtinctions by which the higher orders kept the multitude in ſlavery, we have ſeen a Conſtitution founded on the equitable principles of fraternal Union. Mild as are their laws, the French have agreed to puniſh the ſale of a vote by death; and thus corruption, the ſupport of moſt other Governments, is, in this, as far as human means can accompliſh, happily excluded. The reſponſibility of Miniſters, is real, not nominal. The ſitting of the National Aſſembly continues only for two years, and then a diſſolution gives place to Members entirely different from the former, by which, as all men have a chance of becoming a component part of the Legiſlative Body, whatever abſurdity and error may at firſt be produced, a manly ſpirit of rational liberty is univerſally maintained; and, in the courſe of a few years, every claſs of people will become perfectly enlightened. An Aſſembly of Reviſion will

will then take place, in order to examine into the effects of the preſent ſyſtem of Government, for the purpoſe of reform or change, as ſhall appear neceſſary; and as every Citizen will be competent to conſider the ſubject, and will feel it to be connected with his deareſt intereſt, whatever errors may be diſcovered will be then corrected, without danger of violence or tumult.

On contemplating this ſyſtem and its fundamental principles, it is impoſſible not to be ſtruck with the contraſt between the French Revolution, and the Revolutions which we have been accuſtomed to read of in ancient Hiſtory. Formerly any violent change in Government was effected for the purpoſe of placing ſome ambitious man on the throne, or at the head of public affairs. The change, in the Government of France, has been produced by the Nation; and the very principle of the new ſyſtem, by which Members are precluded from ſitting in the Aſſembly during the exiſtence of two Legiſlatures together, is a death-blow to all private views of perſonal ambition. The authors of that principle, animated by a noble enthuſiaſm, ſeem to have ſpurned all ſelfiſh conſiderations, and conſulted only the good of the people. It is ungenerous, that their inceſſant and arduous labours for the accompliſhment of this object, ſhould have been rendered a ſubject

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of ridicule and abuſe: it is unjuſt that, at ſo critical a period, the dark machinations of foreign Courts ſhould have been ſet to work in every mode to alarm and diſtract the nation: it is cruel in the extreme, that the French—when every circumſtance of peace is neceſſary to enable them to emerge from the difficulties produced by the vices of the former Government, and to ſecure permanency to the preſent—ſhould have been forced into a war with the combined forces of ſo many infernal deſpots. No matter! Under whatever diſadvantages they may at preſent labour, however their imprudent confidence may at firſt have ſubjected them to defeats, whatever diſgrace may have been incurred by the conduct of the daſtardly and diſaffected, who have contrived to become incorporated with their army, I have no doubt of their final triumph, over all the hoſtilities and all the accurſed arts of foreign deſpotiſm. Let them prove exemplary in puniſhing thoſe amongſt themſelves who tarniſh the luſtre of their proceedings by acts of cruelty: wherever they conquer, let them be guided, in their conduct towards the vanquiſhed, by that ſpirit of divine benevolence which diſtinguiſhed their celebrated Manifeſto! Let them act thus, and rely on the energy of rectitude for ſucceſs!

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POSTSCRIPT.

MUCH of what I have written reſpecting the beauties of the New Conſtitution of France, might, perhaps, with propriety, be obliterated, the various unexpected events that have ſince happened having annihilated that Conſtitution. But the principles of juſtice are always praiſe-worthy, however they may for the moment be violated; and as the ſecond New Conſtitution, if modelled by real philoſophers, may be expected, in its general principles, to bear ſome ſimilitude to the former, I ſhall not eraſe the paſſages in queſtion. The events which have ſince occurred, have, indeed, in part, been ſtrange and ſhocking: during two days only, the inhuman atrocities of Paris have produced more ſcenes of blood-ſhed than had occurred in the whole courſe of the preceding Revolution. The human mind revolts at peruſing details of ſuch extreme cruelty. Even thoſe who, animated by an exalted love of civil liberty, had hitherto been tremblingly alive for the ſucceſs of the French cauſe, were tempted to ſpurn ſo noble a principle, when they ſaw its ſplendour ſullied by the

the cruelties of the 10th of Auguſt, and the 2d of September. They were humbled with grief and ſhame, and joined in the general exclamation, that when Revenge could thus triumph in carnage, there could be no real *Liberty*. The ſpirit of liberty is a humane and tolerant ſpirit; daring in the aſſertion of rights, of which Warriors and Kings, thoſe children of ignorance and violence, have hitherto bereaved mankind; but ſcorning as much to oppreſs as to endure oppreſſion: abhorring all perſecution and carnage; and delighting only to do good, and to diffuſe ſuch noble principles as can alone civilize, dignify, and bleſs mankind.

It is a debt, however, which we owe to juſtice, to examine before we condemn; and, in candidly tracing effects to their cauſes, we muſt confeſs, that the ſeries of provocations which the French Nation had received from the arts of the Court party, had riſen to a climax ſufficient to extenuate, though certainly not to abſolve, the guilt of the vindictive atrocities of popular reſentment. The ſame circumſtances which extenuate their guilt, involve proofs of the abſolute neceſſity of ſuſpending the royal authority, and of recurring to the will of a National Convention. Let us not forget, that ſcarcely had the Conſtituent Aſſembly diſſolved, and the people felt happy in the poſſeſſion of a ſyſtem of equitable

equitable laws, than every art was exerted, internally and externally, to haraſs and divide them. The correſpondence of an aſſemblage of emigrants on the frontiers, with diſſaffected and corrupt individuals in the Departments, and the efforts of fanatical Prieſts to inſpire their hearts with an abhorrence of the New Conſtitution, required ſpecific Decrees for their ſuppreſſion, which the King refuſed to ſanction. Treaties and leagues, hoſtile to France, were formed by foreign powers, which excited neither His indignation nor His notice; and when it was evident, that a ſyſtem of connivance between the Court of the Thuilleries and the Emigrants, was about to be detected, and that the Miniſter for Foreign Affairs, being accuſed, fled, the impending rupture between the Court and the People was haſtily averted by the choice of men, of acknowledged patriotiſm, for Miniſters. The ſucceſſor of Leopold now threw off the maſk, and ſtating various cauſes of complaint, expreſſed his determination of trying the force of arms: the King was at laſt neceſſitated to propoſe war, which was immediately decreed. Hungary, by her conduct, obliged France to declare hoſtilities; and nothing was now more evident than the danger of the delay of preparations, which had been neglected in conſequence of the refuſal of the Royal Sanction. Aided by theſe combined forces ready to act againſt France, and

by agents within the Country, who uſed every artifice to inflame the weak, and corrupt the profligate, the King believed, or was taught to believe, that all farther diſguiſe became unneceſſary; and, at one and the ſame time, the Patriotic Miniſters were diſmiſſed, diſcord was ſown in the armies, and thoſe of the prieſthood who, while they could gratify private views, were not aſhamed to diſgrace their profeſſion, renewed with redoubled vigour their diabolical machinations. Theſe circumſtances, and the ſucceſs of the enemy in their firſt conteſts, rendered it apparently neceſſary, for the ſafety of the Country, that a camp ſhould be formed round Paris, and meaſures adopted to repreſs the dangerous activity of the Prieſts—but the Decrees which were paſſed for this purpoſe, the King ſet aſide by his ſuſpenſive veto. It had been the error of the Conſtituent Aſſembly, that in framing the Conſtitution for their Country, they had overlooked the probability of events which had ſince taken place, and not provided againſt the emergencies of War: they had granted the King a ſuſpenſive *veto*, by which the will of the Legiſlative Body was ſet aſide for four years; and Louis XVI. at this critical period, advantaged himſelf of a power which the Conſtitution had ſo fatally granted him, to render null meaſures, of which the ſafety of the Country called for the immediate execution.—

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Another circumſtance happened much about the ſame time, to aggravate, in the public eye, the criminality of this meaſure. The King's body guard, which had been formally diſſolved, experienced the countenance and protection of Royalty. The enraged and diſtracted populace flew to the Palace, and ſurrounded the King, who having declared himſelf in ſafety among them, and amuſed them by wearing thoſe favours which were conſidered as inſignia of patriotiſm, was relieved by the preſence of Petion, by whom the populace were induced to diſperſe. A Proclamation was immediately iſſued; Proſecutions commenced againſt thoſe who had rendered themſelves, by their conduct in this tumult, obnoxious to the Court; and Petion, the popular Mayor of Paris, was ſuſpended. Whatever cenſure and reſponſibility had before perſonally attached to *Miniſters*, it was impoſſible now not to diſtruſt the *King*. His whole conduct had been a violation, ſometimes of the ſpirit, ſometimes of the letter, of the Conſtitution. The Conſtitution had pronounced the abdication of the King, if he did not, by ſome formal act, declare his oppoſition to enterprizes againſt the Nation, undertaken in his name. The Emigrant Princes had in his name raiſed money, and levied troops; and conſcious of this fact, at the time when the recent occurrence of the Court had exaſperated the people, the

Aſſembly could not do leſs than make a declaration that *the Country was in danger!* Petitions from the Departments claimed the depoſition of Louis XVI. and the Legiſlative Aſſembly meant to have weighed well the circumſtances before they came to any deciſion; but they found that they could no longer truſt to the public patience. The populace marched with a threatening aſpect towards the Palace of the King, who immediately ſought an aſylum from their reſentment among the Repreſentatives of the Nation. Nor were the facts which I have already ſtated, the ſole grounds of diſcontent. The Conſtitution had expreſsly declared, that no foreign guard ſhould be charged with defending the reſidence of the King; but the people obſerved, with concern and anger, that in ſpite of ſuch legal prohibition, this office was allotted to the Swiſs Battalions. It was eaſy to foreſee that this violation of law muſt finally produce miſchief; and no effort, by reports, motions, and diſcuſſions, had been neglected in the National Aſſembly, to appriſe the King of his danger, ſome months before a poſitive Decree was neceſſary to be iſſued, demanding their removal. Their Commander, ſupported by Miniſtry, exacted the amendments of that Decree: it was amended: Jealouſies and hatreds, in the mean time, continued fermenting between the Swiſs Guards and the People, the latter of whom, armed and aſſembling in bodies,

almoſt threatened actual hoſtility, and it was thought neceſſary to ſend a deputation from the Aſſembly, which proceeded towards the Palace, in the midſt of the citizens, for the purpoſe of reconciling thoſe animoſities, and preventing their effects. The Swiſs Guards held out the ſign of amity, and when the Citizens, delighted and aſtoniſhed at this promiſe of reconciliation and peace, ran towards them with joy beaming in their countenances, thoſe treacherous ruffians fired upon them from maſked batteries:—fury ſucceeded to tranſport in the breaſt of the populace: a deſperate conteſt took place between both parties: the Swiſs, overpowered by ſuperior numbers, and almoſt all of them butchered, the carnage that enſued was dreadful. In the midſt of theſe tumults the National Aſſembly, while the ſhot were flying through the windows of their Hall, took the Oath to maintain Liberty and Equality, or to die at their poſt. In declaring their determination to ſave their Country, they ſaw but one mode—that of recurring to the will of the People, expreſſed through the organ of a National Convention, and of pronouncing the ſuſpenſion of the King.—The popular fury, however, had not exhauſted itſelf on the 10th of Auguſt, that day rendered ſo memorable by the treachery and ſlaughter of the Swiſs Guards, for the 2d of September was diſgraced by ſcenes of greater violence and barbarity. The miſ-

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taken, but honeſt, feelings of Fayette, who had proteſted againſt the meaſures lately adopted, taught the people to ſuſpect the fidelity of their Generals: News was brought of the ſiege of Verdun, by the Duke of Brunſwick; and it was added that 4000 men, ſent to aſſiſt that place, had been cut off, by the treachery of their leader. A Decree was iſſued by the Community of Paris; the tocſin ſounded; and a multitude cried out, "To arms!" The alarm and indignation of the people, on the report of this news, was farther aggravated by the art of a faction who had chiefly promoted theſe inſurrections, and, by inflammatory ſpeeches, wound up their feelings to a pitch of ſavage madneſs. "We are ſtill betrayed, cried ſome; we are to be butchered like ſheep! If we muſt be butchered (exclaimed others) we will ſell our lives dearly. But before we attack our external, let us wreak our vengeance on our internal, enemies." The horrid propoſal was adopted; the populace flew to the Abbaye and different priſons, where the refractory Prieſts and other priſoners were confined, and inhumanly butchered them: all was proſcription, perſecution and ſlaughter: Not merely obnoxious individuals among the Prieſthood, but the whole orders to which thoſe individuals belonged, including numbers of juſt and worthy men, found their ſafety only in flight: A ſanguinary ſpirit of revenge ſtalked through

through the ſtreets of Paris, ſpreading terror and deſolation.

Over ſuch crimes, humanity muſt weep! but let it not be forgotten that the French had juſt grounds for reſentment; and if that reſentment urged a conſiderable number of them to barbarity, we ought not to impute, as diſgraceful to the national character, an effort which proves diſgraceful only to the old deſpotiſm of the country. Horrid as are the maſſacres of the 10th of Auguſt, and the 2d of September, inſtead of giving up a whole Nation to ſcorn for the cruelties of two days, we may rather wonder that their conduct, ſince the firſt Revolution, has not conſiſted of an inceſſant ſeries of ſlaughters, in conſequence of the treacheries they have had to encounter, and the ſanguine ſpirit they might be expected to have imbibed, from a long familiarity with the dungeons, tortures, and racks, of their ancient Government. In judging, therefore, of the miſconduct of the people of France, let us weigh their provocations with their actions. What people, ſtruggling for the nobleſt of all objects, civil Liberty, could have been ſtudiouſly oppoſed and thwarted by more cruel impediments? What people, in the infancy of their New Conſtitution, could have had to contend with greater difficulties? Avowed enemies on the Frontiers: ſecret enemies perpetually about

about the Court: Miniſters conſtantly betraying them: the King faithleſs to his engagements: Agents, hired to corrupt the profligate, by bribes and promiſes, and to impoſe on the weak by falſe and alarming impreſſions, circulated through the medium of the Preſs. What people could more frequently have forgiven the machinations of inſidious deſpotiſm, againſt all that was dear to them, all that they thought neceſſary to conſtitute their happineſs? But human feelings cannot be ſported with for ever. The paſſions that have calmly ſubmitted to injury after injury, may at laſt be aggravated to madneſs: and an inſurrection of thoſe Pariſians who were the immediate witneſſes of Court treachery, muſt finally have been expected.—The inſurrections of the populace of Paris, on the 10th of Auguſt, and the 2d of September, were produced by a concurrence of circumſtances, the force of which it was impoſſible to reſiſt; and the cruelties that attended them, were, doubtleſs, aggravated by the unbounded licence which ſanguinary ſpirits derive from ſuch occaſions, to mingle in the mob, and indulge in committing the moſt deteſtable barbarities. Theſe maſſacres, however, diſgraceful as they were in themſelves, may poſſibly have been the means of preventing more dreadful maſſacres by the other party: But with whatever abhorrence we may view the ſubject, we ought not to feel lukewarm in

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the cauſe of Liberty, becauſe ſome of its aſſertors have done wrong; nor diſclaim a grand, general principle, becauſe it may have been partially diſgraced.

Theſe inſurrections, and the ſuſpenſion of the Royal Power, have formed a ſecond Revolution in France; and the National Convention has decreed, that the Government ſhall be a Republic. Much better had it been if the firſt Conſtitution could have exiſted unimpaired, till the ſitting of the Reviſional Aſſembly, who might then have eſtabliſhed a perfect Republic, or modified the ſyſtem anew, according to their experience of its errors and its dangers. But all hopes of proceeding on ſo regular a plan, were fruſtrated by the perpetual treacheries of the Court Party; and, in my opinion, the abolition of Monarchy in the National Convention has been, conſidering the imperious nature of the circumſtances, an act of abſolute neceſſity. If the relative duties of life, which, under the diſſolute manners of the old deſpotiſm, became generally deſpiſed, ſhould be held ſacred, I had deemed it, even abſtracted from the circumſtances that produced it, an act, not only of abſolute neceſſity, but of perfect wiſdom and virtue. We may lament the fate of Louis XVI. a man, to ſpeak diſpaſſionately and juſtly of him, of mild manners, who might have

proved conſiſtent in his conduct, and ſtill continued the idol of the Nation, had not his character been marked by a mental imbecility, which perpetually rendered him, though not perhaps a deſpot in himſelf, the willing tool of deſpotiſm: but while we commiſerate the ſufferings of one man, who, however exalted his rank, can be only an atom in the general ſcale of human exiſtence, let us not for a moment place *his* individual welfare in competition with the welfare of MILLIONS! (In ſaying this, I ſpeak only in reference to the loſs of his Crown.) The Conſtituent Aſſembly had granted him all the power that Kings ought to have, and an immenſe revenue: but this power was exerted in the protection of obnoxious characters, or the encouragement of plans fatal to Liberty; while the wealth intended to ſupport the ſplendour of his Throne, was laviſhed to aid the Emigrants in their plans againſt the Nation: and how can we expect, that, with ſuch a Monarch, France could have hoped for peace or ſafety? France, indeed, has ſuffered too much from the vices of Kings, not to aboliſh them altogether: and what right have we to condemn her for the act, if ſhe thinks that an Executive Council will anſwer all the purpoſes of Royalty, without producing any of its dangers; and, that it will render the Government leſs expenſive, at the ſame time that it precludes

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the pageantry of a race of beings, who never want men about them to pamper their paſſions, and to perſuade them to prefer, as a diſtinct intereſt, the authority and grandeur of their Throne, to the ſolid good of the People! What may prove the merits of the New Conſtitution, about to be eſtabliſhed for France, it is impoſſible to ſay, till the Committee appointed to frame it ſhall have finiſhed their important labours; but judging from the great integrity and talents of the men who are employed in that important office, we feel reaſon to expect the adoption and execution of a ſyſtem of liberal Government and equitable Laws.* It affords much pleaſure to obſerve, that the Convention, in their early ſittings, expreſſed the utmoſt contempt of thoſe characters, who diſtinguiſhed themſelves by countenancing proſcription and blood-ſhed, during the troubles of Auguſt and September; that they recommended to their Generals, whenever ſucceſsful, to act with friendſhip and fraternity towards the people whom they might chance to conquer; and have already given proofs of encouragement to Literature and the Arts: but, in God's name, let them not continue to ſully the luſtre of thoſe

* One of the enlightened Decrees of the National Convention, has invited all intelligent perſons in other Countries, to favour the Committee with their plans and opinions on this ſubject—a certain proof that, generally ſpeaking, they have only the real intereſt of the people at heart.

proceedings, by the vile treatment by which their former Monarch ſeems now to be perſecuted. Till Louis XVI. was no longer an object to be dreaded, their oppoſition to his ill-directed authority was juſt and meritorious: Now that he has loſt his Crown—now that he is within their power, every perſonal injury will be cruel and deteſtable. He has, I have juſt heard, been brought to the bar of the National Convention, and anſwered their interrogatories with conciſeneſs and ability: but why interrogate him at all? or, why try him? unleſs to juſtify their own conduct; to develope circumſtances which ſhall open the eyes of other Nations to the conſpiracies of their Courts; and finally, to pardon the object of their impeachment? They ought to forget the errors of Louis XVI. in conſideration of the prejudices of his education; they ought to forgive them, ſince they have proved ſo favourable to the cauſe of Liberty; and with regard to the man, they ought either to baniſh him with a penſion for the ſupport of himſelf and his family, or generouſly to make him a Citizen of the Republic, and to tell him, that the Citizen of a Free State, was a nobler character than the Monarch of a land of ſlavery. Inſtead of this, he ſeems at the preſent moment to be treated with a rudeneſs and indignity which moſt ſhocks thoſe whoſe exultation at the fall of deſpotiſm in France,

France, led them to form the brighteſt hopes of the triumph of humanity; and, which juſtifies a fear that he is deſtined to fall a victim of diſgraceful vengeance. If this event ſhould happen, it will be evident to thinking men, that thoſe ſanguinary ſpirits who fomented the late maſſacres in Paris, have continued to acquire a dangerous influence in the National Convention: and the real friends to the liberty of France will be diſappointed indeed, to ſee the leaders of that Convention, without power to prevent ſo infamous a deed, and to puniſh with ſeverity its diabolical inſtigators. When Brutus ſlew Cæſar, he performed a glorious action, ſince he attempted to ſave his Country by the deſtruction of a man who had arrived at a dangerous pinnacle of greatneſs: but for a people to deſtroy an unhappy being, whom, having found it neceſſary to dethrone, they ſee proſtrate at their feet, without power, and without danger—to daſh the lion's brains out with a club, after they have rendered him tame and harmleſs, by plucking out his teeth, and cutting off his nails—is the unmanly bloody action of cannibals and cowards. I ſpeak freely on this ſubject. No man reveres the principles of the Revolution of the French more than I do; but let not the fair trophies of freedom be ſtained with blood! France has made a glorious and ſucceſsful ſtruggle for her ancient liberty; but

the principles of liberty itſelf, unleſs reſtricted by the ſalutary regulations of moral rectitude, may be puſhed to ſuch an exceſs as to degenerate to licentiouſneſs, anarchy, and murder; and what avails it that that Nation has thrown off the deſpotiſm of Kings, if ſhe bows to the deſpotiſm of the paſſions; or that ſhe has reared the ſtandard of Republicaniſm, if ſhe ſuffers the commiſſion of a crime which is as remote from the manly character of a Republic, as Hell from Heaven!

But I truſt that my fears are groundleſs, and that it is from a vile party only, whom the majority of the Convention diſclaim, and will ſhortly puniſh, that diſgraceful violences can be expected. As an opportunity has been preſented to Louis XVI. to detect all forgeries calculated to injure him, by preſenting to his examination the obnoxious papers ſanctioned by his ſignature; and as his requeſt reſpecting the aid of Counſel has been granted, I think that it is the intention of the ruling powers of France to ſave the life of that unfortunate man, in ſpite of the ruffian-attempts of violent and ignorant demagogues; and to ſuffer his trial to take place, for no other purpoſe than that of doing juſtice to the people of foreign Countries, by declaring the dark conſpiracies, which may be thus diſcloſed, of ſceptered deſpots againſt their liberty.

berty. Truſting to theſe expectations, I will not judge too harſhly of the National Convention, in conſequence of ſome rigorous meaſures that the momentary influence of a violent, though, I truſt, ſmall faction among them, may have induced them to execute, but, I will rather flatter myſelf, that their general conduct will be propitious to the intereſts of genius, philoſophy, and virtue. May they reſiſt with firmneſs every unprincipled attempt to diſtract the Country by internal diviſions! May they ſwear never to ſanction the vices of ambition, by entruſting the Sovereignty of the Nation into the hands of individuals, deſirous to uſurp the ſupreme power, whether for themſelves, under the title of Emperor, Dictator; or, in conjunction with others, as a Triumvirate. *It may prove the policy of ſuch characters to excite repeated tumults, and to over-awe the Aſſembly of the Nation by the menaces of bodies of armed men, in hopes that the people at large, tired and haraſſed by continued inſurrections, may at laſt be glad to throw themſelves under their protection, and to give up the cauſe of Univerſal Liberty as a compenſation for the ſecurity they hope from the gratitude of tyrants: And what matters it that France has diſclaimed the obnoxious title of* King, *if ſhe bow her head to regal tyranny under another name?* But I truſt that ſuch fears are vain: that no ſociety will harbour men deteſtable

teſtable enough to prefer their own paltry gratifications to the public good: and that the maſs of the people, who, I am told, are animated by a more than Roman Spirit, are too unanimous not to riſe ſuperior to all the arts of any poſſible faction at home, as well as the more avowed attempts of foreign enemies, to deſtroy their independence.

If the Laws of the Republic prove worthy of ſo moral and free a form of Government; if a Conſtitution be ſpeedily eſtabliſhed, on liberal, but not impracticable principles, for the enforcement of order, France will not too precipitately have condemned titular diſtinctions and State-pageantry, as calculated only to amuſe and impoſe upon the mental imbecility of more barbarous ages; but, on the contrary, her two Revolutions will have been only ſucceſſive purifications through which ſhe has paſſed, in order to arrive at that ſtate of political perfection which muſt inevitably ſecure her future happineſs and glory.

But Mr. Burke reproaches the aſſertors of Liberty in France, as a race of ATHEISTS. I have already ſaid, that though the charge may have applied to ſome few characters, I diſbelieve it in the extent implied by Mr. Burke: But if they *be* Atheiſts, they are certainly the moſt wonderful Atheiſts ever recorded. Speculative Atheiſts, like all ſpeculative men, might be expected to prove too mild and quiet, to become

active

active inſtruments of any efficacy in a National Revolution:—yet theſe men have been the decided leaders of the people. Practical Atheiſts, like all wicked men, would have ſought to gratify their paſſions, by aſpiring to the regal power: yet theſe men ſeem to have exiſted only for the Nation, not for themſelves! If they be Atheiſts, they ſeem peculiarly protected by that GOOD BEING, whoſe exiſtence they have denied. Strange, indeed, have been the actions of the Atheiſts of France! In their Firſt Revolution, they declared againſt the vice of War: In their Second Revolution, after having been forced into a War with ſome of the moſt formidable deſpots of Europe, they have declared—not deſtruction, not death—but fraternity and friendſhip to the people of thoſe countries which they may chance to conquer. Still more ſtrange have been the ſucceſſes of the Atheiſts of France! The ſoldiery, whoſe force would have deſtroyed their early efforts; the ſoldiery, who had been trained to the principles of military deſpotiſm, refuſe with one accord to fire upon their fellow-citizens. The King, who had taken every precaution to fly at the critical period when the firſt Conſtitution was forming, is diſcovered after he had proceeded a great part of his journey, and brought back to Paris; and thus, by his ſubſequent conduct, prevented the people from placing the Crown on the head of

any other branch of the Royal Family, by irreſiſtibly convincing them of the dangers of royalty. The early attempts of the Emigrant Princes to induce the Monarchs of the Continent to undertake a political cruſade, are, at the moment when their efforts muſt have proved fatal to France, totally unſucceſsful. When their attempts at laſt ſucceed, and the diabolical preparations of Foreign Courts are ready for operation—an operation which would then have ruined the armies of France, ſcarcely organized and diſciplined—the time of year, and other unavoidable circumſtances, throw them back, till France herſelf can dare to defy them. When their armies enter France, and, giddy with firſt ſucceſſes, declare by Manifeſtoes their intention of executing *a terrible revenge*, they experience a ſtern and unexpected reſiſtance at Thionville, and, weakened by vain efforts and diſeaſe, they are forced to retreat from the attacks of the French, with loſs of men, diſgrace, and ſhame. Such have been the ſucceſſes of the ATHEISTS of France: ſucceſſes which force me to believe, that as the cauſe of the People is the cauſe of Truth and Virtue, it is bleſſed by the peculiar protection of God. HE who heeds not points of faith, nor ſpeculative opinions, nor modes of worſhip, has proved propitious to this race of Atheiſts; and while this race of Atheiſts, as Mr. Burke calls them, act from integrity of intention,

intention, He will continue propitious to them, and the Combined Armies and helliſh artifices of every Court in Europe, will not prevent them from proving finally victorious, and ſpreading the ſacred flame of Liberty all over the Earth.

I cannot wonder, that different people in this Country ſhould behold, in very different lights, the French Revolution. Some men, of a very benevolent tone of mind, are actuated too much by the amiable feelings of their hearts, and deteſt the general principle on which that event was effected, in conſequence of the impreſſions received from particular inſtances of attendant barbarity. Others, not naturally inſenſible to the principles of juſtice, view things on a narrow ſcale, and think, not ſo much of the general advantage to the Nation, as of the partial degradation of this or that character: they can feel for the dignity of Kings, but they cannot feel for the acquiſition of happineſs to the general maſs of People. Others are naturally of a deſpotic diſpoſition; they make a tacit compromiſe with the civil power; they connive at the tyrannies of Governments, provided they may themſelves be tyrants, in their own little circle, over their wives, children, and domeſtics; and conceive that men, in certain official ſituations, may conſider as their own property

the rights of their fellow-creatures—a ſwiniſh multitude, in whom true patriotiſm is faction, and a reſiſtance of the abuſes which they pay to ſupport, rebellion. Others derive from our political Conſtitution certain excluſive benefits, of which they dread the loſs, if the example of France ſhould be imitated in this Country. The *Clergy*, for the moſt part, condemn a ſyſtem of Government which appears to diſclaim the incorporation of a particular Church Eſtabliſhment. * The *Law* are alarmed at a precedent which threatens the annihilation of myſteries and quibbles, and, founding a ſyſtem on clear and intelligible principles, affords to the oppreſſed a ſpeedy and cheap adminiſtration of juſtice. The *Army* regard, with abhorrence, that progreſs of reaſon which will teach man-

* When I ſpeak in this manner of the ſpirit of different profeſſions, I certainly expreſs myſelf generally: and am well aware that there exiſt particular exceptions. I have the ſatisfaction of enjoying the friendſhip of ſeveral worthy Clergymen of the Eſtabliſhed Church, whoſe opinions in diſfavour of the Revolution in France, I am convinced, originated in purer motives than thoſe which I have generally aſcribed to the order. I could likewiſe mention ſome few characters in the Law, whoſe intentions in condemning the affairs of France ought to be exempted from cenſure. But theſe are only particular exceptions: and I ſtill aſſert, that the *general* ſpirit of all eſtabliſhments, profeſſions, and corporations, is a ſordid, contracted ſpirit, acting ſolely in reference to the preſervation of ſome excluſive privilege, appropriate to itſelf, rather than from an enlarged view of things, and a love of the public good.

kind

kind to avoid the miſeries of War, to deſpiſe the military profeſſion, unleſs its members prove themſelves to poſſeſs the feelings of Citizens, and to conſider that, on all other grounds, a profeſſed ſoldier is nothing elſe than a profeſſed murderer. The *State* tremble, leſt men ſhould be taught no longer to approach the abuſes of Civil Adminiſtration, " with *pious awe* and *trembling ſolicitude*," in conſequence of the ſucceſsful efforts of the French people, who dared to think that their Government was intended not to oppreſs, but to protect them; and therefore, took into their own hands that ſovereign power which had been exerciſed by others ſo unworthily. But the unhappy prejudices which ſerve as the baſis of ſuch fears, will be removed in time, and poſterity will do juſtice to the French Revolution, and contemplate with admiration and awe, an event, the blemiſhes of which will be overpowered and loſt in its general ſplendour.

Should the French Republic ſucceed, and its Citizens derive peace and happineſs from an impartial Adminiſtration of mild and equitable Laws, the practical principles of politics will have aſſumed a new aſpect, and the example of France will, doubtleſs, have a powerful influence over the conduct of other Nations. We ſhall have witneſſed the ſucceſs of a grand experiment,

ment, viz. a Government founded on goodneſs, that will either induce a reform in thoſe States which are intrinſically good, but diſgraced by abuſes, and a complete ſubverſion of thoſe of which the principles and the practice are deſpotic; or finally, render all the Governments of this little Globe, Republics, divided from each other by ſections, leſs for the purpoſe perhaps of national diſtinction, than that of univerſal convenience. At any rate the ſpirit of political amelioration muſt prevail; and with the amelioration of Governments, that alſo of morals and of manners. Mankind will at laſt throw off the bondage of ignorance and error. Governments will be endeared to the People, becauſe evidently proceeding from *their* will, for *their* good: they will encourage, inſtead of the titles and diſtinctions of oſtentatious folly, Arts, Sciences, and Literature: they will grant equal protection to all Religions, not ſhew partial favouritiſm to any one particular ſect: they will diſclaim War. Differences of religious opinions, if any ſuch differences ſhould exiſt, inſtead of embittering life with perſonal hatreds, will unite in good will and friendſhip, the members of every religious ſect, who will feel that they are all brothers, and that their various modes of worſhip are but various ways of teſtifying filial piety towards their Univerſal Father. All will be cheerfulneſs and peace.

Men

Men, riſing ſuperior to the wants and vices of luxury, voluptuouſneſs, and pride, will relinquiſh an anxiety for their own paltry gratifications, for the greater pleaſure of benefiting each other: they will exchange that mutual contempt, which diſtinguiſhes and diſgraces the various ranks of life at preſent, for mutual eſteem and friendſhip, and the human heart will beat with joy at the ſight of a fellow-creature. Life will no longer prove a tragic puppet-ſhow. All the earth will ſmile under the mild reign of Civil and Religious Liberty: Philoſophy, reſcued from indigence, and exploring and revealing the myſterious laws of nature, will benefit ſociety by diſcoveries, not yet imagined: and mankind, emerging from the Cimmerian darkneſs of deſpotiſm and ignorance, ſhall enjoy the bright days of perfect virtue, wiſdom, and happineſs.

LETTER V.

Inadequacy of the National Repreſentation, admitted by the firſt characters in Parliament—Duty of a Reform lies wholly with the People——General ſuggeſtions on the ſubject——Remarks on ſome of the opinions of Junius.

SIR,

THE ſubject of the Revolutions in France, naturally leads my attention to the neceſſity of a Reform of the National Repreſentation in the Britiſh Parliament. Animated by the pure ſpirit of patriotiſm, and conſcious of their rights, it might have been expected, that after the impreſſion made on their minds by the firſt of theſe Revolutions, the ſlighteſt incident in their favour would have taught the PEOPLE *of this Country*, either to emulate the efforts of France, or to preclude the poſſibility of

of ſimilar events among themſelves, by a timely remedy of the abuſes by which their own Government is confeſſedly diſgraced. An incident in their favour, not trivial, but great and important, did occur. The names of characters, high in Office, were brought into a Court of Juſtice, and into the Houſe of Commons, under a poſitive charge of *corrupt interference* in the laſt Weſtminſter Election. It is not my buſineſs to advert to the particulars of the enquiry into that ſubject which took place in a Court of Juſtice. The Law has already paſſed its deciſion. But I will venture to ſay, that ſo far as the buſineſs was developed in the Houſe of Commons, it preſented nothing but the appearance of a total contempt of public principle in our Legiſlators, and of a ſyſtematic plan to deſtroy the juſt exerciſe of the rights of their fellow-citizens, by every art of political corruption. The Debate was, indeed, caculated to afford pain to every honeſt mind; and whether we regard the vile and paltry tricks to which it proved men in power willing to condeſcend, in order to ſecure their parliamentary intereſt, or the very indecent circumſtance which attended its concluſion, it could not poſſibly have any other effect on the opinion of the People, than that of diminiſhing their natural reſpect towards thoſe who legiſlate for them in the character of Members of the Houſe of Com-

nons. At the concluſion of the Debate, Mr. MARTIN (whoſe independence, openneſs, and integrity, entitle him to more honour than the miſguided admiration of the multitude ever laviſhed on the worthleſs heads of their moſt favourite Orators) obſerved, that, "painful as the diſcuſſion had proved to his feelings, it afforded him ſome ſatisfaction, to think that it would open the eyes of the public to the corruption of their Repreſentatives, and convince them of the neceſſity of a Parliamentary Reform." To this obſervation no reply was made: This diſgraceful charge revolted the mind of no man: By no man was it indignantly repelled: The only emotion that it excited was—ſhame to tell!—a *general burſt of laughter*. The queſtion was put, and the Houſe adjourned. Such conduct might characteriſtically belong to a gang of thieves, who, having been detected in their illicit practices, attempt to juſtify their villainy by impudence, and, with the brazen front of low inſolence, glory in avowing that which they find they no longer can conceal: But it certainly could not have been expected from the dignity, the wiſdom, and the integrity of a Britiſh Legiſlature. All this, however, produced no ſalutary conſequences in the conduct of the people without doors. No Meetings were held, and no meaſures were adopted,

adopted, * on the ſubject of an abuſe, which, violating the ſacred rights of men, it might have been feared would have aggravated general

* I mean, no Meetings on an independent principle. I recollect, the oppoſition party *did* advertiſe a Meeting, to take the buſineſs into conſideration; and I then hoped that the electors would ſpurn the invitation, and diſdain to become the inſtruments of one party, in their attempt to worry the other, on the ſubject of an abuſe which they knew to be practiſed by both; and of which *they*, the electors, were the acceſſories, and the victims. But, No: inſtead of taking the conſideration of the buſineſs into their own hands, and leaving thoſe who had inſulted them by their invitation, to dine, and form their Reſolutions by themſelves, a conſiderable number did actually attend, and ſwallowed this degradation to their dignity, as Citizens (who ought not to want to be told by *party-men* how they are to act) as complacently as they did their meat and wine. Abject, degraded beings! Unworthy of the title of Citizens, or of Men! How can you expect that you ſhould not be played on by your rulers, when you ſo implicitly ſubmit to their impoſitions? How can you hope that even your parliamentary favourites will fail to deſpiſe you, when they ſee that your occaſional ſervice is not the affectionate tribute of Independence, but the ready ſubmiſſion of a mean and ſervile ſpirit?

When the Writer puts theſe interrogatories, he would by no means degrade the Electors of Weſtminſter, for befriending any ſet of political men whom they may have reaſon to eſteem. The election of Mr. Fox, as the object of their choice, has generally done honour to their judgments and their hearts: But let them, even in manifeſting their well-placed kindneſs, draw a line between thoſe occaſions which will prove that they are *Men*, and thoſe which will prove that they are *Slaves*. It had ever been pleaſing to the writer of theſe letters, to behold ſo great a character ſo warmly befriended by the Electors of Weſtminſter, but it is diſguſting to ſee beings, caſt in the ſame mould of humanity, aid and approve, with the indiſcriminate willingneſs of ſneaking dependence, rather than with the appropriate teſtimony of applauſive friendſhip.

indignation to tumult and outrage. The fact was, that the people were, in general, too perſonally acquainted with the nature of the evil, to feel ſurpriſe at its promulgation, and they could not conſcientiouſly aſſemble for condemning a corruption, which they all knew Miniſters had, time immemorial, been in the habit of indirectly practiſing, and of which they had too frequently experienced the immediate and pernicious advantages, not only from every Adminiſtration, but every Oppoſition, alſo.

No Engliſhman who wiſhes well to his Fellow-citizens and his Country, can reſiſt the mingled emotions of regret and ſcorn, when he reflects on the ſtate of National Repreſentation in Parliament. I ſhall not here touch on the principle of thoſe Writers, who ſay, that every Government is unjuſt, except that which is ſimply repreſentative: but I cannot help thinking it hard, indeed, when the national repreſentation is graciouſly allowed to make only *one-third* of the Britiſh Government, that every manœuvre ſhould be uſed by the powerful and wealthy men of both parties, to poiſon the ſources of popular election—ſources, in themſelves both partial and narrow—and thus to render that repreſentation defective! The Houſe of Commons is the democratical part of the Britiſh

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Conſtitution, and ought therefore to be diſtinguiſhed by the features and character of a Democracy. But ſuch can never prove the caſe, unleſs the popular branch of the Legiſlature be rendered a real, not a nominal, repreſentation of the people. The *rights of Electors* ought to depend on *ſome ſimple, general principle*: their choice to be perfectly free and unbiaſſed: and the objects of that choice ſelected chiefly from the middle rank of life. Thus would the intereſt of Arts, Merchandize, Manufactures, and Trade, be involved in that of Government, the tie of union between the Nation and its Repreſentatives be drawn cloſer, and the effects reſulting from the deliberations of Members choſen according to honeſt principles, and blending their views with thoſe of their conſtituents, prove favourable only to national happineſs and welfare! It is the opinion of Monteſquieu, that public virtue is the ſoul of a democracy; as neceſſarily as that moderation is the proper principle of an ariſtocracy, and honour that of a monarchy. As our Conſtitution conſiſts of theſe three forms of Government balanced againſt each other, it is impoſſible, if either of them loſes its peculiar character, that it ſhould actually be the form of which it bears the name; and, that the Conſtitution in practice, ſhould prove any thing elſe than a mere mockery of its theory, and an inſult on the people who live under its Adminiſtration.

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Such is undoubtedly the caſe at preſent, ſince the Houſe of Commons is not a real repreſentation of the people: but if thoſe principles, which I have laid down as neceſſary to regulate Parliamentary Elections, were adhered to, that Houſe would prove a real repreſentation of the people, and it would neceſſarily be animated by the characteriſtic principle of a Democracy, Public Virtue, becauſe its Members would feel, that political integrity was perſonal gain. But on what rotten ground is the ſyſtem of Parliamentary Repreſentation at preſent erected! Every art is exerted by the ariſtocracy of the country, to corrupt and over-awe the popular elections. In one borough, the determination of a wealthy inhabitant, who hopes for indemnity in the gratitude of great friends, and whoſe power and patronage enable him to exert an irreſiſtible influence over the minds of his leſs opulent neighbours, regulates the popular choice, and ſome worthleſs, or perhaps detefted, character, is thus rendered the ſucceſsful candidate. In other places, elections are carried on by an unwarrantable act of tyranny, ſtill leſs varniſhed over by the appearance of mildneſs: the voters are coolly told by the ſteward of their powerful landlord, whom they are to nominate, and thoſe who dare evince any independence of principle, are ejected their tenements. In others, the borough is acknowledged to be perſonal property;

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its repreſentation is even ſold by the lordly deſpot to the higheſt bidder; and the poor ſlaves of electors, rather than be turned out of doors and ſtarve, are forced to reſign their rights for ever. And in others, where they are free from thoſe diſgraceful ſhackles of evil bondage, every art is exerted to corrupt their integrity: There appears to be a conteſt between the candidates, for the palm of ſuperior extravagance in offering, and between the voters, for that of greater meanneſs in accepting, bribes:—and reminding us of the ſhepherds of all the paſtoral poets, from Theocritus and Virgil, down to Philips and Gay, it is ſo difficult to decide the victory, that if one party deſerve a Crook, we ought in juſtice to beſtow a Pipe upon the other.

The voters think that they have gained their object, if they have added a few guineas to their purſe for the preſent moment, and ſeem to have no idea how wretchedly they ought to expect to be governed, when their governors owe their power to ſuch baſe arts; and how natural it is, that thoſe who can prove villains in order to become legiſlators, will become legiſlators for the purpoſe of proving villains. Weak, unhappy men! not to know that political vices, like all others, will return ſome day upon the heads of the guilty; that you will ſoon be obliged to refund the profits of your corruption,

corruption, with heavy intereſt; and that the party (either already in power, or expecting to be ſo) who may have ſupplied the means of public corruption, will, undoubtedly, by additional burthens, amply remunerate themſelves for the vaſt ſums which have been abſorbed in the vortex of avarice and meanneſs!

Theſe abuſes have afforded ſome writers an argument againſt the principles of popular election: but their argument againſt the principle, derived from its abuſe, is unjuſt. The abuſe does not proceed from a democratic, but an ariſtocratic, principle; not from the people, but from thoſe powerful and wealthy individuals who corrupt them. The people know that they have no real ſhare in the Government of the Country; and they think that for ſupporting a mockery they may as well be paid. Let the Houſe of Commons be a true repreſentation of the country, formed on democratical principles, and, as the people will know their rights, and feel their dignity as citizens, the evil muſt fall to the ground. If we admit a contrary principle, and ſay that thoſe enormous abuſes are inſeparable from a Democracy, it will be wiſer to have no Houſe of Commons at all; and for the intereſted individuals of our two parties, who preſume to talk as if a Parliamentary Reform depended on *their* will, to pronounce fairly

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that the Britiſh Government, ſhall, in future, conſiſt only of the Monarchy tempered by the hereditary Ariſtocracy, or that it is deemed expedient to allot to the Crown the nomination of the Houſe of Commons.

No man, I think, will venture to affirm, that the grievances which I have ſtated, reſpecting the practical buſineſs of elections, ought to exiſt; and their exiſtence therefore calls loudly for a reform of the ſyſtem of National repreſentation. That ſuch is the opinion of our firſt ſtateſmen, is evident from the records of the Britiſh Parliament. In the years 1782 and 1783, Mr. Pitt declaimed againſt the corruption of the Houſe of Commons, and ſtrenuouſly inſiſting on the neceſſity of an equal repreſentation, as the only mode of alleviating the misfortunes of the country, brought forward the queſtion of parliamentary reform; though without effect. He again brought it forward in 1785, but loſt it by a great majority: a circumſtance not very pleaſing to thoſe, who had looked to Parliament for a redreſs of their grievances, and were aware, that the influence of the Miniſter can ſecure a majority to any queſtion which he wiſhes to carry. In the courſe of theſe propoſitions, Mr. Pitt had been ſtrongly ſupported by Mr. Fox, the late Sir George Saville, and the Duke of Richmond. The agitation of this queſtion had been chiefly produced by Aſſociations, eſtabliſhed in the year

1781, in many parts of the kingdom, for promoting ſo laudable an object, which declared, by public Addreſſes, their ſtrong ſenſe of the *diſgraceful venality* of the preſent repreſentation. Sir George Saville and Mr. Dunning wrote a letter to the Yorkſhire Committee, ſeconding their intentions, and unequivocally charging the Houſe of Commons with the groſſeſt corruption. Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan, Colonel Fitzpatrick, and General Burgoyne, moſt cordially co-operated with the Yorkſhire Delegates, and declared, that nothing ſhort of a real repreſentation in Parliament could ſtem the torrent of political corruption. The public addreſſes from Aſſociations were reprobated by ſome Members—no doubt very *diſintereſted* men—in Parliament; but Mr. Burke defended them, though he did not adopt their ideas on Parliamentary Repreſentation.* Yet theſe Gentlemen think it prudent at this time to hold very different language. Mr. Burke appears to conſider all rational reform, as dangerous innovation. Mr. Pitt deems the preſent to be *not the proper time* for ſuch a meaſure; he ſaid ſo, when the late Mr. Flood brought it forward, long before any fears were entertained concerning inſurrections; and Mr. Fox, yielding perhaps to the bias of party friendſhip—alas! that ſo great a mind will not

* See theſe facts placed in a very lively and ſtriking light, by Major Scott, in his "Letter to Mr. Burke."

burſt

burſt the ties of private ſympathy, when ſubjects, calculated for the public good, are in queſtion !— Mr. Fox has coincided in the ſame doctrine. And the Duke of Richmond,—wielding arms againſt an hoſt of foes, is willing to over-awe the meaſure, by taking the lead in the moſt expenſive military preparations. Thus it is that ambitious men, while out of office, affect a zeal for the cauſe of truth and liberty: but no ſooner have they taken poſſeſſion of the ſeat of power, than all their virtuous profeſſions are abandoned, the abuſes of which they formerly complained become too favourable to their preſent purpoſes not to be perpetuated, and the people are taxed, to ſupport a baſe ſyſtem of political corruption, while their parliamentary leaders, whom, in the hour of honeſt ſimplicity, they had fondly deemed the alleviators of their miſery, feel as little for their diſtreſſes, as brutal carmen or hackney coachmen, for the ſufferings of the animals which they drive—animals, ſo much more generous and noble than themſelves!

But it is perhaps a circumſtance, finally favourable to the intereſts of the People, that thoſe in whom they confide ſhould invariably, when they become capable of exerting every effort in their favour, abandon the cauſe, and that however ſeverely they may have inveighed againſt

the inadequacy of parliamentary repreſentation, yet, from the moment in which they can graſp the reins of government, their great care is to ſecure the maintenance of that wretched ſyſtem. It teaches them not to be too laviſh in their applauſe of any political character, till he has proved that he deſerves it; and that, as *Parliament* cannot be truſted with their confidence, in the redreſs of a grand political evil, they are the more bound to ſeek for juſtice *in* THEMSELVES. Moſt fortunate is it, that their hopes of obtaining a reform of their own repreſentation through the medium of Parliament, has been conſtantly unſucceſsful; ſince men, whoſe intereſt is ſhaken, if once ſuch a meaſure takes place, could never be expected to provide a liberal and adequate remedy. The inadequacy of the meaſure itſelf, however, could not prove greater than the impropriety of the principle, of ſuch a meaſure proceeding from ſuch a ſource. *Parliament* have no right, they can have no right, to effect a parliamentary reform. A body, which is ſo defective as to be deemed ſcarcely competent to the office of juſt legiſlation without reform, can never be competent to the exerciſe of powers ſo extenſive as thoſe, which are neceſſary to rectify its errors and ſupply its deficiencies. Parliament is not the private property of the individuals, who, at this or that time, happen to compoſe it: It is the concern of the PEOPLE; it is inſtituted for *their* good, and to

them

them alone belongs the power of its reform. But thank God! men begin at laſt to ſee their rights, and, notwithſtanding the ſucceſs of momentary efforts to keep them in the dark, will aſſert them. The reform of their repreſentation, will, as ſoon as the preſent artful clamour againſt inſurrections, ſhall have ſubſided, become the ſole object of popular attention; and it is *our* duty to hold out ſuch lights as our views of the ſubject can afford to the honeſt part of the community, for the purpoſe of aſſiſting them, to diſcover the principles which they ought to conſult in the execution of a taſk ſo important, ſo arduous, and ſo beneficial to the intereſt of themſelves and of poſterity.

But whatever degree of attention the ſubject of Reform may claim, I am aware, that there ſtill are many men, who will not admit its expediency at the preſent moment. Some perſons, who either enjoy offices and emoluments under government, or are members of our different corporations, imagine, that ſuch a meaſure may ſhake their perſonal intereſt or authority: others, not in the habit of thinking for themſelves, are miſled by the outcry againſt reformers, ſo artfully excited by both parties in Parliament: and others, acting from honeſt intentions, think it right, that they ſhould ſet their faces againſt that which may excite tumult,

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and introduce innovation. None of theſe characters will I condemn, eſpecially thoſe of the latter deſcription; but I will venture to affirm, that they all act more or leſs from miſtaken principles, and that, if they will attentively examine the ſubject, diſcarding paſſions and prejudices as much as poſſible from their minds, they will ſee the prudence and abſolute neceſſity of co-operating in the work of Reform. That our Parliamentary Repreſentation is inadequate, cannot be denied; for the People are not admitted to a general and free choice of their own repreſentatives. That there exiſt abuſes in the general adminiſtration of affairs, which none ought to redreſs but the People, is equally apparent; becauſe the continuance of thoſe abuſes tend to the advantage of both parties in Parliament. Particular grievances may be oppoſed in Parliament with ſucceſs: they, ſooner or later, ceaſe to be neceſſary, and ſooner or later, are, therefore, remedied. But any general corruption that Miniſters may introduce, is ſeldom, or never, extirpated: for when thoſe who oppoſed its introduction, are admitted to the government of the Country, they feel an equal intereſt with their predeceſſors in office, in continuing the ſame diſhoneſt ſyſtem: and, it is from this cauſe—it is from the frequency of engrafting general abuſes into the plan of govern-

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ment—that our Conſtitution has been gradually changed, and is totally different in practice from what it appears in theory. An additional argument in favour of the neceſſity of reform, ariſes from the fear ſo evidently betrayed on the occaſion, by thoſe who compoſe our Parliament. The members cry aloud againſt every wiſh on the ſubject that may be framed by THAT PEOPLE who honour them, by ſuffering them to be their legiſlators, and to conduct their affairs. What ground can there poſſibly be for theſe fears and theſe menaces, if, conſcious that an examination into their political conduct, with a view to reform parliamentary abuſes, can redound only to the credit of the preſent ſyſtem? Indeed, Sir, every ſtep that is taken in an enquiry of this nature, proves, that the People *muſt* do their duty, and cordially unite to correct the corruptions of that government which they pay ſo dearly to ſupport.

The plea, which the honeſt and well-meaning part of ſociety, who, at this time, condemn a parliamentary Reform, moſt ſtrenuouſly urge in defence of their opinion, is founded on the dangerous conſequences which may ariſe from the meaſure at the preſent moment. But the deep ſenſe which they have of the juſtice of this objection, appears to me to have been produced, rather by the general impreſſion which its apparent tendency has made

made upon their minds, than from any conviction, reſulting from a rational enquiry into its propriety and truth. Let us then fairly examine into the critical circumſtances of the preſent moment, and into the probable conſequences of an union of the nation to effect a parliamentary reform at ſuch a juncture. A general fermentation has ſome time ſince exiſted in the minds of men: and a ſtrong deſire, that whatever grievances they ſuffer, may be redreſsed, by enabling the Houſe of Commons to become their real repreſentatives, inſtead of ſuffering the corrupt principles on which it is conſtituted at preſent, to render that branch of the Legiſlature a mere inſtrument of deſpotiſm; a body, as ſervile in its devotion to the will of the Crown, as it appears to be eſtranged from all regard to the intereſt and happineſs of the People. If this be the fact, I would aſk, what period can prove ſo propitious to reform, as that in which it appears to be the general wiſh of the kingdom? But the example of France, it is feared, has contaminated the minds of a number of perſons in this country; a party already exiſts who are deſirous of a ſimilar event among ourſelves: and if any attempt towards *reform* be ſuffered, to this party it is believed we ſhall owe, not the amelioration, but the total overthrow, of the Britiſh Government. That ſuch a party does exiſt, I am perfectly willing to admit: but it is to the exiſtence of this

this party that I owe my firm perſuaſion of the neceſſity of an immediate reform. This party is at preſent but ſmall; it is not equal, even to that of the *objectors* to Reform, and it is trivial indeed, compared to the aggregate number of thoſe who are *favourable* to the meaſure. But though their number be comparatively trivial, their intention appears to be ardent, and their conduct determined. If means be taken to prevent a rational Reform, the wiſh for a Revolution which they ſo loudly aſſert, will appear juſtifiable; for it will be a plauſible argument, to urge, that the ſyſtem, which will not admit of a correction of its abuſes, muſt be radically bad, and ought to be totally changed. If we *refuſe to unite* in ſo important a taſk as that of rational Reform, they will be enabled to act alone, and their ſelf-directed energy may meet with too much ſucceſs: If refuſing to unite in that important taſk, we determine to *reſiſt their efforts* towards ſubverſion, what can poſſibly be expected, but ſcenes of tumult, anarchy and blood? In either caſe, our Conſtitution will be ſhaken to the center, and thoſe to whom it affords advantages, muſt expect ſoon to bid farewell to the continuance of places which they hold; or the farther exiſtence of the Corporations to which they belong. The only plan therefore, that it is wiſe for moderate and honeſt men to adopt, is to join in their views,

ſo far as regards a Reform in the National Repreſentation, and to ſubdue their power of executing farther projects, by ſwallowing up *their* numbers in the ſuperiority of *their own.* If the citizens of this country unite, in order to recur to the firſt principles of Government, if an union of all thoſe parties be cheerfully effected, viz. of thoſe who decidedly wiſh for a Reform, of thoſe who object to it from a miſtaken idea of its danger, and of that ſmaller, but dangerous body, who are deſirous of nothing leſs than overturning the Conſtitution: as every queſtion will inevitably be carried by a majority, the two greater parties muſt abſorb the ſmaller one, and thus render its intentions of no effect. This, I will aſſert, to be the language of one, who wiſhes not for tumult but for peace. All the firſt characters in office, all the political luminaries of both ſides of the queſtion, and their ſatellites, know, that what I have advanced is true, and when they exclaim, (as they have done for ſeveral ſeſſions of Parliament, previous to the preſent alarm at the danger of inſurrections) that *this is not the proper time for Reform,* they merit the execration of their country. While the people are tolerably contented, theſe *intereſted* politicians can have the baſeneſs to attempt to excite a ferment, by crying aloud, that the repreſentation of the country is defective, and ought to be reformed; but no

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ſooner does conviction awaken the minds of the public to the ſame ſentiment, than this is declared not the proper moment for ſuch a meaſure. Thus it is, that Stateſmen trifle with the feelings of that nation, which honours them with its ill-placed confidence! What time *can* be ſo proper, as when the people begin to be generally diſcontented? But theſe honourable men profeſs to fear, that at ſuch a moment, ſome violent change in the Conſtitution will be effected. They know, all the time, that, according to the common proceſs of natural cauſes, it will not; they know, that the *general* ſenſe of the nation is ſtrongly againſt any radical change of an eſtabliſhed Government: but they are perfectly aware, that their own pertinacity muſt finally produce ſuch an event; for the people will, *at laſt*, wholly reject a ſyſtem, which is rendered the tyrannous ſanction to corruption. No matter to *them*. Provided it ſerves *their* purpoſes as long as poſſible, why need they dedicate one thought, one effort, to give uniformity and ſtrength to the crooked, tottering pillars, of our venerable Conſtitution?

The only conduct, which well meaning and prudent men can adopt at this time, is, I repeat it, cordially to co-operate with thoſe, who wiſh to effect a Parliamentary Reform; to hear and

compare the plans which are propoſed for that purpoſe; and when their minds ſhall have inveſtigated the ſubject, to act together with that firmneſs, but moderation, which the importance of the buſineſs demands. The difficulty, however, of this buſineſs, will by no means prove equal to the importance, provided we attain clear ideas of the nature of our object. The evil which requires redreſs, conſiſts of the partial ſtate of National Repreſentation, the abſurd qualification of electors, and the neceſſary evil to which ſeptennial Parliaments are liable of being influenced by the Crown, and independent of the people. The object, therefore, that we wiſh to accompliſh, is, *to render the Repreſentation of the people more general; to found the qualifications of Electors on ſome general and rational principle; and to ſhorten the duration of Parliaments.* In order to accompliſh this object, it is neceſſary that we examine into the principle on which the idea of repreſentation is founded, and we ſhall find it, ſpeaking abſtractedly, the right of *every man in the country* to be repreſented in Parliament, and therefore, the power of every ſuch man to vote in favour of that perſon, whom he deſires to appoint as his repreſentative. This principle accords with the ſpirit of the Britiſh Conſtitution: but ſince it cannot be *literally* acted upon, we are obliged to have a recourſe to a legal fiction, and to ſuppoſe the fact, making our practice, however,

ever, accord with the principle as nearly as the poſſibility of the caſe will allow. The grievance under which we now labour, ariſes from this circumſtance, that the principle is ſcarcely at all regarded, and that, though it were impoſſible for *every* man in the country, actually to give his vote at Parliamentary elections, yet the power of voting might be much more equally diffuſed among the people than it is at preſent. Common ſenſe, as well as common juſtice, may teach us, that, conſiſtently with the principle, EVERY TOWN *in the* KINGDOM ought to be freely repreſented, and EVERY INHABITANT to have the power of voting, *ſo far as the practicability of the proceſs can poſſibly extend.* The ideas which I ſhall ſuggeſt, will not be found to overſtep the boundaries of that practicability.

It has been the chief project of almoſt all our popular reformers of Parliamentary Repreſentation, from the celebrated Lord Chatham, down to the late Henry Flood, to increaſe the number of Knights of the ſhire, and Junius, in his letter to Mr. Wilkes, has termed this project admirable. To my mind, however, it appears too partial and haſty a method of finiſhing the buſineſs. An addition of this nature would neither give repreſentation to thoſe towns, which for their extent, population, and manufactures, require to be repreſented; nor would it tend to

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lay open the local ſources of repreſentation in ſufficient variety and number throughout the country. It would, perhaps, be better, that no increaſe of Knights of the ſhire ſhould be made, but that their preſent number ſhould remain, that all the market towns (the inſignificant ones excepted) ſhould ſend repreſentatives, and that when a conſiderable number lay near each other, two or more ſhould be collectively repreſented. Suppoſing that two candidates be nominated for each place, the number of Members of the Houſe of Commons may, by this means, be made to amount to about ſeven hundred: a number, when choſen upon honeſt principles, too conſiderable to be corrupted.

With regard to Rotten Boroughs, ſurely the plan of Parliamentary Reform were pitiful indeed, which could ſuffer their exiſtence! All Boroughs, under the influence of the Crown, or at the diſpoſal of individuals, ought to be diſfranchiſed. I am aware, that Junius warmly proteſts againſt this principle,* and his authority on the occaſion has been quoted by thoſe, to whoſe advantage it has tended. But no authority ought to overbear our ſenſe of juſtice, and before we decide with Junius on the preſent ſubject, we may fairly aſk, who this Junius is? That

* See his Letter to Mr. Wilkes on the ſubject, dated the 7th of September, 1771.

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the writer who ſo ſucceſsfully adopted that ſignature, has diſplayed brilliant talents, and a perfect knowledge of the Conſtitution of this country, every man muſt admit; but was he independent of every party bias, and political intereſt? the tenor of his letters proves that he was not, and judging from this circumſtance, it is not uncharitable to ſuppoſe it very *poſſible*, that when Junius, who on ſo many occaſions proved the ardent aſſertor of liberty, thought proper to diſapprove the cutting away Rotten Boroughs, he had a private ſtake in the exiſtence of ſome Rotten Borough himſelf? The ground, however, on which Junius reſts his objection, is, that ſuch a meaſure would be equivalent to robbing the parties concerned of their birthright; to which I can only anſwer, that an hereditary excluſive ſhare, in the repreſentation of the elective part of the Britiſh Government, ought to be the *Freehold*, and the *birthright* of no man whatever. Nothing but the preſſure of peculiar circumſtances can juſtify thoſe meaſures, apparently illegal, which are termed acts of ſtate neceſſity; but ſurely, if acts of ſuch a nature be ever juſtifiable, it will be in the preſent inſtance. State neceſſity is urged as a plea for iſſuing preſs warrants, which have been frequently recognized and admitted by Parliament, and there are judicial opinions given in their favour by Judges of the firſt character; but ſhall this plea be urged, to juſtify the ſei-

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zure of perſons from their houſes and families, for the purpoſes of war—that wholeſale trade of human butchery!—and ſhall it not be ſuffered to operate in favour of the petty injury that individuals may ſuffer by the disfranchiſement of Rotten Boroughs, in a cauſe ſo important to ſociety as the reform of their repreſentation? That injury would of courſe be indemnified by an adequate compenſation. When Junius, however, aſks, "if the majority of the Houſe of Commons can disfranchiſe ten Boroughs, why not twenty? why not the whole kingdom? why ſhould not they make their own ſeats in Parliament for life?" he propoſes queſtions that are perfectly conſtitutional and juſt. The majority of the *Houſe of Commons*, the majority of *both Houſes*, though the conſent of the Crown be added to ſanction the deed, can have *no* right to interfere in ſuch a ſubject. The disfranchiſement of Rotten Boroughs, like the reſt of the buſineſs of Reform, muſt be effected by the majority of the PEOPLE, and it is *they*, who will cheerfuly indemnify the poſſeſſors of ſuch Boroughs, for any diminution their property may ſuſtain.

The *juſtice* of the legal principles, on which the qualifications of electors now depend, will not bear examination. It is time that principles which derive all their authority from an abject

veneration

veneration of the abſurd and tyrannous relicks of feudal barbariſm ſhould exiſt no longer. It would therefore be proper, entirely to aboliſh the diſtinctions of freehold and copyhold, *ſo far as they affect the power of voting in Parliamentary elections.* To allow *every citizen without exception* to vote, were indeed a wild attempt, however right in theory; but it would be both practicable and rational to grant that privilege to all houſeholders, reſiding in places entitled to the right of election, and paying taxes of fifty ſhillings and upwards. Theſe voters, taken in the aggregate, I would denominate GENERAL ELECTORS; and their office ſhould be to chooſe PARTICULAR ELECTORS from among themſelves, with whom alone ſhould reſide the right of polling for Members of Parliament. In order more clearly to carry on this proceſs, which is copied from the mode adopted in France, diviſions into equal departments, conſiſting of a certain number, as a *thouſand*, might be made of the general electors, and, out of every *hundred*, *ten* might be choſen, for the purpoſe of proceeding to the election of the Candidates. Thus would moſt of the houſeholders in the kingdom ſtand a chance of being in the number of *particular Electors*, and at the ſame time poſſeſs the certain power of voting as *General Electors*.

Having rendered the repreſentation of the people more fair, and founded the qualifications of electors on an impartial equitable principle, the next ſtep would be to reſtore the old period of the exiſtence of Parliament for three years. Other regulations might likewiſe be adopted, ſuch as the infliction of ſome capital puniſhment on thoſe Candidates and Electors, who either give or receive a bribe; * and the allotment of *five hundred pounds per annum* to every Member of the Houſe of Commons, as a ſalary for his agency of the public buſineſs. This laſt regulation, inſtead of laying heavy on the purſes of the public, would prove a very conſiderable ſaving, ſince Members of moderate fortunes, and many ſuch there are at preſent in the Houſe of Commons, needing no ſecret ſupplies from thoſe who had otherwiſe corrupted them, would prove too independent to vote for meaſures which they knew to be adverſe to the public good; or to conſent to taxes which were not only burthenſome, but unneceſſary and unjuſt.

By ſuch meaſures alone can we expect to purify from its abuſes, the Britiſh Legiſlature. By

* I know it will be ſaid, that Laws on the ſubject of bribery at Elections, &c. already exiſt. If we examine, however, into the real fact, we ſhall find that theſe laws are inadequate to the purpoſe.

ſuch

ſuch meaſures alone can our national repreſentation be rendered too extenſive and too independent to be eaſily corrupted, and while its deciſions ſhall be neceſſarily regulated not by *party*, but by *principle*, the preſent ſyſtem of government will take root firmly in the hearts of a happy people, who having reaſon to love and reſpect their Parliament, will become more and more alienated from the poſſibility of wiſhing well to a *Revolution*.

I am, dear Sir, &c.

POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE, &c.

LETTER VI.

Revolutioniſts defended as to their abſtract principles---Why dangerous---Our preſent mixed form of Government adapted to the national character---All our Parliamentary abuſes owing to the want of a ſyſtematic corrective---What that ſhould be, proved from the analogous caſe of other corporations---Plan of a permanent Conſtitutional check, &c. &c.

SIR,

MY chief motive in ſo ardently wiſhing for a Parliamentary Reform, is, by removing the grounds of popular objection to the preſent frame of government, to remove likewiſe the moſt juſtifiable plea that may be urged in favour of a Revolution. If the arm of power be raiſed for the puniſhment of thoſe who ſhall endeavour to redreſs the inadequacy and corruption of parliamentary repreſentation, it will naturally be exclaimed, " Periſh the ſyſtem which ſanctions public injuſtice, and will not permit the people

ple to correct the abuſes of their own Legiſlature!' But the preſent ſyſtem of Britiſh Government appears to me, to be adequate to the diſſemination of many advantages to the people, if properly corrected; and even were its errors enormous and irremediable, I ſhould grieve at any ſudden and violent effect to accompliſh a Revolution: ſince the attempt might not prove ſucceſsful but by the previous deſtruction of thouſands; and if unſucceſsful, would afford a plauſible pretext for eſtabliſhing the ſterneſt deſpotiſm. I adopt this opinion from a conſciouſneſs of the acrimony and violence to which the minds of many are too ſubject in the courſe of political conteſts; from the belief that the Revolutioniſts are far exceeded in number by thoſe who wiſh well to the preſent Conſtitution (and the opinion of the majority ought always to prevail); and from a fear of the danger that would ariſe, owing, not to thoſe who are ſincere and honeſt in their political profeſſions, not thoſe who wiſh favourably to the public good, but to the injuſtice of that claſs of men, who are ever ready to ſide with any party from corrupt motives, and, profeſſing political principles with a zeal, only proportioned to their want of it, ſtick at no miſchief by which they can ſecure their private ends. Of the intentions of the perſons themſelves, who by their writings, or their converſation, prove the ſincerity of their wiſh for the accompliſhment of a Revolution, in this country,

country, I am willing to entertain the higheſt opinion. Whatever be their errors, I am convinced that they mean well; and are by no means thoſe *daring factious* characters, which I have heard them termed in moſt of the daily prints, and in other publications under the direction of the two parties in Parliament. The few of theſe daring factious men whom I have met with, I have found to be perſons amiable for their moral excellence and their liberality of ſpirit;—perſons of a mild, benevolent diſpoſition, and whoſe great and ſole object has been the happineſs of human nature. Shocked at the miſeries ariſing from an artificial form of government, which to them appeared to abſorb every ſource of wealth and independence from the honeſt and hard-labouring claſſes of the community, for the ſupport of its own grandeur, it is not their factious, but their benignant ſpirit, that induced them to wiſh for the demolition of ſuch a government, in order to alleviate the miſeries it produces. They think it hard, that the moſt uſeful members of ſociety ſhould have their induſtry taxed to maintain the needleſs pageantry of a Court: they think, that nature has admirably created every diſtinction among men, that is neceſſary in the buſineſs of life, ſuch as genius and dulneſs, induſtry and idleneſs, vice and virtue, and that the artificial diſtinctions of rank, inſtead of benefiting mankind, beget contempt and arrogance on the one hand, and envy and meanneſs

on the other: they think, that of contraries only one can be good, and the reſt muſt be bad; and that therefore, of a Legiſlature, conſiſting of diſtinct and contrary orders, one muſt be right, and the reſt being conſequently wrong, ought to be aboliſhed: they think that, being all human beings, all of the ſame kindred, poſſeſſed of the ſame organs, and regulated by the ſame affections, it is contemptible and baſe to ſink below the level of our fellow creatures, or to affect to ſtalk above it; and that the only natural, uſeful, and juſt civil conſtitution, is founded on a ſyſtem of political equality, and conducted on the principles of fraternal union. Man, they affirm, would then become the friend of man, the grand ſource of taxes and oppreſſions by which millions of beings are rendered the tame machines, in the work of human butchery, of ambitious villains, would be at an end, ſince the comfort of all would ceaſe to be ſacrificed to the artful projects of a few. Applying theſe principles to the caſe of Great Britain, they deprecate a Conſtitution which they conſider inſtead of being free, as the more dangerous tyranny, becauſe of an impoſing and ſpecious appearance. The Houſe of Commons alone they would deem ſufficient to the purpoſes of Legiſlature, if that Houſe were a free and fair repreſentation of the people: but they ſee that it is not ſo; they ſee that it is a mere Ariſtocracy, and that under the pretence of being a Democracy,

and

and requiring a political balance, it is rivalled by another Ariſtocracy, termed the Houſe of Peers. They deem it extremely unjuſt, that this ARISTOCRACY of NOBLES ſhould prove a conſtant body of *ſelf-repreſentatives*, when the repreſentatives of the PEOPLE (the higheſt character in a free country) are very properly diſſolved at the end of every ſeven years, and freſh returns made to parliament: they declare it to be abſurd, that the accidental circumſtance of high birth ſhould entitle any order of men to take a ſhare in the Legiſlature of the country, and to act in the important office of judges on the property of others in caſes of the laſt reſort, without any previous proofs of integrity and wiſdom; and they feel it to be a burleſque and mockery on human reaſon, that thoſe excluſive privileges ſhould belong to men, who, dreſſed in ſtars and ribbons, and diſtinguiſhed by oſtentatious high-ſounding titles, affect to be a ſuperior race of mortals, and are ſtiled Nobles; whereas there cannot exiſt any real nobility except that which conſiſts in a virtuous elevated mind. The Crown likewiſe they view, not as the mere Executive Power of the Government, which it ought to be, but as the concentration of all the political powers, executive and legiſlative, in the perſon of one individual. Inſtead of enjoying the proper office of dignifying the decrees of the Legiſlature, by giving them ſanction and efficacy, they ſee the repreſentation

tation of the executive branch of our Conſtitution poſſeſſed of the prerogative of rejection alſo; and they feel with extreme concern, that, if even the other parts of the government were founded on an upright principle, all its intentions might be fruſtrated by the caprice or turpitude of a weak or wicked individual, ſince, after the houſes of Lords and Commons have been deliberating on any meaſure for a month together, the King is ſuffered to refuſe his aſſent, and the polite deſpotiſm of *Le Roi s'aviſera* annuls even the moſt virtuous and moſt wiſe proceedings of two houſes of national legiſlature. When they contemplate the Britiſh Conſtitution in this light, they are ſhocked at the praiſes which are beſtowed on it by the *honeſt* ſtateſmen of both parties in Parliament: they ſay, that trial by jury is the only part of our ſyſtem which fairly deſerves the name of liberty, the only civil RIGHT which is granted to the people: but they ſeem evidently to believe our political Conſtitution, *i. e.* the organization of our Government in general, to be a maſs of artifice and corruption; that it is a concealed tyranny, a ſtate puppet-ſhew, calculated only to deceive and govern the people: the grand abſorber of national treaſure; a ſpecious and contemptible fabrick of ſplendid impoſture!

The truth of the *general principles* of Revolutioniſts, conſidered in the abſtract, cannot be

denied: but it appears to me a ſufficient anſwer to the application of theſe principles to the Britiſh Conſtitution, to ſay, that that Conſtitution, owing to its mixed form, is admirably adapted to the various paſſions and prejudices of the people, and that if its theory be but a little corrected, and its practice rendered conformable to its theory, it will be found to be a very eſtimable Conſtitution. All governments will perhaps have ſome defects, and, if the abuſes in our ſyſtem be great, it is poſſible that thoſe abuſes may be corrected without any violent and raſh change of the form and principles of our Conſtitution. The Ariſtocracy, if kept within its proper ſphere, and not ſuffered to pervade and ſwallow up the reſt of the Legiſlature, will be found perhaps to be leſs exceptionable than it is generally painted. In the preſent imperfect ſtate of things, ſome Ariſtocracy, however objectionable in its abſtract principle, may be uſeful: If the pride of high birth be a prejudice, it may be a virtuous prejudice, as inſpiring a conſcious elevation of mind, which raiſes a man ſuperior to the practice of diſhonourable actions; an Ariſtocracy of birth may therefore be more uſeful and dignified than an Ariſtocracy of wealth; and brilliant talents may frequently feel a livelier incitement to render eſſential ſervices to the ſtate from the hopes of ambition, than they poſſibly could from diſintereſted feelings of public virtue. Let the

paſſions

paſſions and prejudices of men be gradually ſubdued by the progreſs of truth, and we may expect ſuch parts of their government as depend on thoſe paſſions and prejudices to be relinquiſhed; and when philoſophers ſhall have enlightened the minds of the common people, and moraliſts have reaſoned them out of the contrary vices of meanneſs and pride, and produced that equanimity among them which ſcorns either to ſubmit to, or adopt, the impoſition of titles, then will the Ariſtocratical diſtinctions in this country ſink to nothing. But as we are by no means arrived at that period, it would ill become us to encourage any effort to deſtroy our Conſtitution, which is ſanctioned by the approbation of a majority of the people, and which, if both its theory and practice be perfected, will prove the ſource of great and valuable bleſſings to the nation.

The only evil which could poſſibly be apprehended would ariſe from the ſupreme and arbitrary power of Parliament. That the Legiſlature is a power "ſuperior to all the other powers eſtabliſhed by law," is a truth which no rational man will contradict; but that its power ſhould be *unbounded* and *uncontroled*, is an evil which ought not to exiſt, and from which have ariſen all thoſe abuſes that now call ſo loudly for reformation. We know, that Parliament has paſſed the moſt abſurd and unjuſt laws in former times; and that, with a

bigotry and baſeneſs, the more unpardonable, becauſe the more inconſiſtent with the rational and tolerant temper of the preſent age, it ſtill ſuffers them to remain on the ſtatute book. We know that Parliament may now frame the moſt abſurd and unjuſt laws, without reſponſibility or control. Parliament, by means of the power of the majority of the Miniſter of the day, may, if it pleaſe, inſtitute another ſtar-chamber; Parliament may aboliſh the liberty of the preſs, or it may at leaſt appoint inſpectors of literature to read all works intended for the preſs, and to grant, or withhold, at diſcretion, their licence for publication. Parliament may expel from the kingdom, all diſſenters from the eſtabliſhed ſyſtem in religion or politics: Parliament may puniſh every individual, who is obnoxious to the exiſting adminiſtration, by impriſonment or confiſcation of his property. All this Parliament *may* do, according to the preſent ſtate of things, without being ſubject to any appeal, to any redreſſing power whatever. Nay more, ſhould any particular adminiſtration wiſh to awe the people into ſlavery, Parliament might decree, that Fortreſſes ſhould be eſtabliſhed in every town in the kingdom, for the purpoſe of defending his Majeſty's ſubjects againſt diſaffected and factious men, and no notice would be taken of ſuch a meaſure by the People; unleſs perhaps that of a citizen's taking his children, on a ſummer's Sunday, to ſee the fine new fortreſs that was

building

building to guard him and them againſt the attempts of wicked rebels; and perhaps if ſome quiet individual were mildly to ſuggeſt the poſſibility of danger to the liberties of the people, ariſing from their being thus ſubject to military law, a rabble, inſpired by loyal zeal for the Conſtitution, might pull his houſe down, and it would be well if they did not tear him to atoms, for a vile and deſperate innovator! Such is the power of Parliament, from which there is no appeal, unleſs it be to their future condeſcenſion, by afterwards petitioning them to do away that injuſtice, which it would be contrary to their own excluſive intereſt to remove, and which having been once eſtabliſhed, would be conſidered as making part of our ſacred Conſtitution! Such is the tame ſubmiſſion with which men muſt conſent gradually to part with all their freedom, when torne from them piece-meal by the tyranny of Parliament! Yet ſubmiſſive as they are to individual abuſes, when thoſe abuſes have accumulated to a certain extent, popular rage becomes as ungovernable, as popular ſubmiſſion had before been abject; and a government which might have proved excellent, had it been calmly and ſteadily purified from its accidental corruption and oppreſſion, falls the victim to a blind and indiſcriminate fury. How then ſhall we correct the evil? By placing ſome check upon the power of Parliament, and by giving civil rights to the People. The poſ-

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ſeſſion of civil rights would inſpire the people without doors with a dignity of mind, and a care for the principles on which all Governments ſhould be conducted, that would prove an effectual barrier againſt abuſe; but the people of this country are ſuffered to enjoy no civil rights,* independent of the licence of Parliament, and all the rights which they do enjoy are conſidered as acts of grace. Let us then ſee, whether we cannot inveſt the people with civil rights, and whether it be impoſſible to form a permanent body, acting upon the principles of thoſe rights, that ſhall prove a check upon any pernicious operations of the power of Parliaments, and, by regular and rational reforms, prevent the probability of Revolutions? and whether this body cannot ſubſiſt conſiſtently with the genius and ſpirit of the Britiſh Conſtitution!

All corporations were originally inſtituted for ſome public purpoſe: ſuch as the advancement of learning or trade, or the benefit of particular ſocieties or communities. But as corporations are liable to abuſes in conſequence of the errors and paſſions of the individuals who compoſe them, the law has eſtabliſhed it as a principle, that thoſe bodies politic ſhall be ſubject to viſitations at

* See this point admirably treated by that able and independent writer, David Williams, in his Lectures on Political Principles.

original

ſtated times, or otherwiſe, by the founders, their heirs and aſſigns, in order to enquire into and correct every deviation from the end of their original eſtabliſhment. * It will excite ſome ſurpriſe, however, to reflect, that while this principle prevails in every other caſe; while the Corporations of our two Univerſities, while the Corporations of our cities and towns, while all the Corporate bodies acknowledged by law, are thought to have been founded on principles, too important to the public intereſt not to render it neceſſary that they ſhould be liable to viſitations, that Corporation which is moſt important to their intereſt, and in conſequence of the errors of which the greateſt danger muſt inevitably ariſe, the BRITISH PARLIAMENT is the only one which is excluded from a reſtriction ſo beneficial and ſo wiſe! This is no doubt a grand defect in our Conſtitution, owing to the injuſtice of Miniſters, who have ever thought, that by keeping the people in ignorance of their rights, or preventing the exerciſe of them,

* "Corporations being compoſed of individuals, ſubject to human frailties, are liable, as well as private perſons, to deviate from the end of their inſtitution; and for that reaſon the law has provided proper perſons to *viſit*, enquire into, and correct, the irregularities that ariſe in ſuch corporations, either ſole or aggregate, and whether eccleſiaſtical, civil, or eleemoſynary. With regard to all eccleſiaſtical corporations, the ordinary is their viſitor, &c. With reſpect to all lay corporations, the founder, his heirs or aſſigns, are the viſitors, whether the foundation be eleemoſynary, &c. &c." BLACKSTONE'S COM, B. 1. ch. 18.

they

they could act with leſs fear of real reſponſibility: and to this defect alone has been owing the regular progreſs of thoſe abuſes which call for Reform, and which ſeem almoſt to have provoked the probability of a Revolution. It is our duty, therefore, to enquire into the nature of the inſtitutions of other Corporate bodies, and then to proceed on analogous principles to form a power capable of viſiting the Britiſh Parliament, which, without reſtricting the fair exerciſe of the authority of that Parliament, ſhall perpetually ſecure to the people their rights, by operating as a regular control againſt any inſtance of its injuſtice.

The ſame perſons who are the founders (or on their deceaſe, their heirs and aſſigns) are juſtly conſidered as the only proper viſitors of Corporations, becauſe they know the object of their own inſtitution, and can beſt determine whether that object has been neglected. The law of this country has thought it right to make the King the founder of Civil Corporations, of which he is virtually the viſitor, and of which the abuſes are remedied by the interpoſition of the Court of King's Bench: but as the King cannot be the founder of Parliament, of which he forms only a component part, who is the founder of that Corporation? The People are its founders. The authority of Parliament, unleſs that Parliament be an uſurpation which ought to be deſtroyed,

flows

flows from *their* conſent, and with *them* it remains, to form a body, in order to viſit the conduct and rectify the abuſes of their Legiſlature. But ſince it would be impoſſible for every individual in the kingdom to bear his part in this important buſineſs, as many perſons might be choſen as the practicability of the meaſure would allow, and elections conducted on principles ſimilar to thoſe which I have before deemed neceſſary for the fair choice of repreſentatives in Parliament, might produce a competent number of citizens, throughout the kingdom, to ſit and act as a GRAND ASSEMBLY OF CONSTITUENTS.

We know that it was the opinion of Mr. Locke, and indeed that of Burlemaqui, and all the great men who have written on the ſubject of civil policy, that the right of correcting the abuſes of their government reſided in the people. For want, however, of ſome organ by which they could regularly expreſs their ſentiments, abuſes have rarely been checked at their onſet, nor has the right of the people been exerciſed but by the dangerous meaſure of national revolt. This is a remedy much too violent, and though it may ſubdue the diſeaſe, generally deſtroys the patient alſo. The method, however, which I have propoſed, would preclude popular violence, and ſo far from being an innovation of the Britiſh Conſtitution, partakes of its form and ſpirit, and

is nothing more than the reſtoration, or rather ſupply, of that which is defective in it, and to the want of which are owing all our preſent diſorders. By the adoption of this plan, the wiſhes of thoſe who are intereſted in the maintenance of the preſent form of government will be gratified, ſince all men, raiſed to a ſtate of moral dignity, by the poſſeſſion of their natural rights, will prove better citizens and more attached to the Conſtitution under which they enjoy them; and even the ſpirit of extreme Democracy will be conciliated, and leſs anxious to aboliſh the titles and rank of our nobles in Parliament, ſince in *this* Aſſembly, repreſenting the body of the people in its conſtituent capacity, all ought to be equal; and it would be improper, that any man, of whatever rank, ſhould derive the ſmalleſt influence from ſuch diſtinctions. The principle on which I would propoſe this plan to be executed, would be, that all perſons reſiding in towns ſending Members to Parliament, and paying taxes of 20 ſhillings per annum, ſhould be entitled to vote as *General Electors*; that thoſe General Electors ſhould be divided into hundreds, and that every hundred ſhould elect ten out of their number to act as *Particular Electors*, and that every thouſand of theſe Particular Electors, ſhould chooſe five from among themſelves, to be deputed to the GRAND CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY. By theſe means about three thouſand or leſs would

be

be finally nominated throughout the kingdom. The election for the formation of this Aſſembly might be diſtinguiſhed from Parliamentary Elections, by the appellation of the *Grand General Election:* and the time of its undertaking might be at the end of every third Legiſlature. The body thus returned ſhould review the paſt conduct of their late rulers, correct the errors of their Government, and refer to the enſuing Parliament their ſenſe of what has been unjuſt in their impoſts, or the other meaſures of their predeceſſors, and what conduct they would recommend to them to adopt: their ſittings might be limited to the duration of three months, in order that they might not retard the buſineſs of the Legiſlature: and they might be reſtrained from acting on any miſchievous principle by the impoſition of an oath, not making them profeſs any belief in myſtical opinions, not binding them in words to the preſervation of the preſent Conſtitution, whether right or wrong, which are acts of baſe tyranny in any ſtate, but ſimply obliging them to give a ſolemn aſſurance, that they would act, according to the beſt of their intentions, for the public good. This would prove an effectual bulwark to the Britiſh Conſtitution, ſo long as its adaptation to the moral ſtate of the people could render it improper to be changed; and would prevent needleſs Re-

volutions, ſince the party who deſire ſuch events, inſtead of producing miſchief by any actual efforts, would be forced to yield, not to ſuperior violence, but ſuperior numbers, and would ſink *to nothing* amidſt the vaſt majority of contrary opinions, to whoſe deciſion they muſt neceſſarily ſubmit.

It is doubtleſs our duty, in the firſt place, to effect a reform of the repreſentation in Parliament. I have already delineated ſome general outlines of my ideas, at leaſt, of the nature of reform; and the quarter from whence it ſhould come I have repeatedly aſſerted to be, the *People*. For Parliament to menace the public, and preſume to take ſuch a buſineſs into their own hands, is as great an abſurdity and uſurpation, as it were if any man, whoſe domeſtic affairs were diſhoneſtly conducted, ſhould think to change his houſehold; and the ſervants, whoſe peculations were thus to be remedied, ſhould ſay to him—" Sir, you grow very impertinent and dangerous, and we deſire you not to meddle in affairs of ſuch importance, but to rely on our juſtice, in taking your grievances at a proper time into conſideration." How then can it be practically undertaken by the People? I ſhould think, that the moſt conſtitutional mode would be, by the Corporations of different towns inſtructing deputies from their

own

own bodies to meet and confer with thoſe of other Corporations on the ſubject: but we know that theſe municipal eſtabliſhments, like all other eſtabliſhments holding excluſive privileges, wink at the abuſes of that power by whoſe ſanction they enjoy immunities which are withheld from their fellow-citizens. Another plan might be, by the conſtituents of borough-towns, &c. deputing a certain number from their reſpective bodies for the ſame purpoſe: but this, I fear, would ſtrengthen, rather than remove, the evil, ſince this weighty office would be entruſted in a great meaſure to the reſidents of Rotten boroughs, and to thoſe very citizens, whoſe implicit ſubmiſſion to the proprietors of ſuch boroughs has conſiderably tended to prove the neceſſity of a Parliamentary Reform. I wiſh the adoption of one of theſe methods could prove efficient, ſince either of them ſo indiſputably accords with the general principles of our Conſtitution; but as neither of them can be regarded with any proſpect of ſucceſs, the only mode that remains is the co-operation of parochial aſſociations, inſtituted throughout the kingdom for ſo deſirable an object. It will prove to the advantage of every freeman of this country cordially to join in the attempt. Fears may be entertained reſpecting the ſecurity of private property; but let it be conſidered, that property is inſecure only when reſpectable and honeſt men keep aloof, and a

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mere rabble are left to act from their own impulse, which is naturally that of a luſt for plunder. Let men of property, let men who have a ſtake in trade and commerce, inſtead of giving a pretext to the mob for violence, cheerfully unite their efforts in favour of a reform, and let them adopt determined meaſures for the prevention of danger, and they may reſt aſſured they will experience no violation of their property.

But the late example of France is adduced by our ſubtle politicians, and endeavours are made to intimidate us from correcting the abuſes of our own government, leſt we ſhould ſhare the misfortunes of our neighbours, and experience a lamentable ſcene of tumult and bloodſhed. Truſt me, Sir, the example of France has no reference to the ſubject. *We* wiſh, a ſmall body excepted, for a Reform: the *French*, a very ſmall body excepted, deſired a Revolution. The errors of our government are ſpecious, though dangerous errors, and, generally ſpeaking, *We* have enjoyed too conſiderable a portion of liberty, to aggravate us, on the acceſſion of our juſt ſhare, to acts of barbarity: but the lower orders of the French were naturally hardened, and driven to exerciſe a deſperate cruelty on their oppreſſors, by the ſcenes of legal inhumanity which they had been accuſtomed to behold, under their ancient government, and the horrid deſpotiſm

which

which they had ſo long endured. The ſubject of France, therefore, is totally irrelevant: and we are to attend only to the abſtract queſtion of right and wrong, with reſpect to ourſelves. Our ſyſtem of government is defective and corrupt; it ought to be corrected; it belongs to us to correct it: and we muſt do our duty.

Among other reaſons alledged as adverſe to the propriety of amending the popular repreſentation, by ſtateſmen who conceive that they, and not the people, have a right to undertake ſuch amendment, it is ſaid, that no Petitions have been received by their Conſtituents on the ſubject. This is indeed adding inſult to injury: but I truſt that, however juſtly the Conſtitution may have preſcribed the proceſs of *petitioning* in other caſes, the people will prove, that they poſſeſs too much ſenſe and ſpirit to petition, for a redreſs of their wrongs, thoſe who have wronged, and who muſt always find it their intereſt to wrong them.* It is their own buſineſs to reform their own Parliamentary repreſentation, and inſtead of ſending ſneaking petitions, in a caſe like the preſent, it would better become them to iſſue out manly Proclamations. Such a meaſure however I would not wiſh to ſee executed, but ſuch a meaſure would better become the dignity of the

* I find that I have been miſtaken in the fact, notwithſtanding the rectitude of my principle. Petitions are at this time, preſenting to Parliament in conſiderable numbers.

People

People without doors, than the buſineſs of Petitioning.—I know that well-meaning and reſpectable men, compoſing thoſe claſſes of life that are involved in Trade and Commerce, will be inclined to neglect a ſubject of ſuch importance, from an idea, that it is too difficult for their underſtandings, and that they ought to leave it to the conſideration of wiſer heads.* But this is a miſtake. The crooked ſyſtem of cunning and violence, which is generally diſtinguiſhed by the name of politics, or political wiſdom, may elude the comprehenſion of plain and honeſt minds: but the eſtabliſhment of a fair and general repreſentation of the people depends only on a regard to the dictates of common ſenſe, and the principles of juſtice, and is not beyond the capacity of ſcarcely any perſon. Do thoſe who are thus diſtruſtful of their power to accompliſh this buſineſs, reflect, that by deſerting their duty they ſubject themſelves to the power of their rulers in Parliament, who are moſt unfit for ſuch an office, becauſe moſt intereſted in patching up a ſpecious and deluſive ſyſtem of Reform? But they think themſelves inferior in the execution of ſuch a taſk, to thoſe experienced and practiſed Politicians. Fatal diffidence! Are they not equally men? conſtructed with the ſame organs? bleſſed with the ſame common underſtandings? equally capable of forming a right judgment, in a ſimple, though important, affair of this kind? and eſſentially

tially different in no other circumſtance than in that of finding it their advantage to act throughout the buſineſs with integrity?

I know that government would wiſh to prevent, by all its influence over the preſs, and all its power over the law and its reſpective officers, the execution of ſuch meaſure: but it were no leſs impolitic and unjuſt in them to adopt any line of conduct, which, at a time like the preſent, could ſet at variance the Parliament and the People. Too much, in my opinion, of this incautious conduct has been adopted already. No ſooner are writings publiſhed on the general ſubject of politics, and the errors of our government pointed out, with a view to their correction, and to ſuch changes as the authors conceive likely to produce an amelioration of the condition of mankind, than the ſcourge of the law is brandiſhed, and we are told in a loud tone, that the authors deſerve the ſevereſt puniſhment as libellers of our excellent Conſtitution. Hence the late proſecution of Mr. Paine. But is this wiſe conduct? If our Conſtitution be really excellent, which with proper correctives it will prove, what libels can hurt it? or at leaſt, will not the legal notice of libels render them more general objects of public attention? A man, like Mr. Pain, emight be repeatedly proſecuted, but if determined to continue writing, eſpecially if he thought it a duty which he owed to his ſpecies, to

diſſeminate principles which appeared to him, however erroneouſly, to be true and virtuous, the proſecution of the man would not check the farther publication of his opinions. Even the circumſtance of impriſonment would afford him better opportunities to write, and ſtimulate the public with greater curioſity to read; and while his *body* might experience confinement in a dungeon, his *mind* would be circulated all over the kingdom.

No ſooner were the public diſpoſed to attend to the ideas of ſuch writers, than a Proclamation was iſſued, preſuming to interfere with and direct their opinions, calling on Magiſtrates to be vigilant in the ſuppreſſion of ſeditious practices, and holding out encouragement to informers to ſend the names of diſaffected perſons to one of the principal Secretaries of State. To ſay nothing of the impropriety of a Proclamation encroaching on the office of the law, which, of itſelf, is always open to the cognizance of what is wrong, I would aſk, if it was not imprudent in Government thus to expoſe their fears, and by endeavouring to over-awe the people from acting as they thought proper in reſpect to a Reform of their own repreſentation, to exaſperate popular reſentment? It is true, that loyal Addreſſes were poured forth from an hundred quarters, felicitating his Majeſty on the object of his gracious Proclamation: But it by no means appears to me, that thoſe addreſſes expreſſed the ſenſe of the country

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at large. They proceed only from Corporate bodies dependent on the preſent ſyſtem, and from meetings compoſed for the moſt part of people who came prepared to vote ſuch Addreſſes. Thoſe perſons in whom this State Paper excited contempt or indignation, kept aloof, that they might not be marked out as obnoxious characters; but I ſuſpect and fear, that, if the real ſenſe of the country had been taken (at the time) inſtead of addreſſes of thanks, the Proclamation of the King would have been almoſt univerſally anſwered by Proclamations of a different nature from the people. No ſooner were men diſpoſed to form aſſociations to conſider the ſubject of a Parliamentary Reform, and to increaſe in the commiſſion of that *horrid crime*, the celebration of the firſt Revolution in France, by which twenty-five millions of our fellow-creatures, from abject ſlavery, had been raiſed to a ſtate of exalted freedom, than camps were talked of, and the people were attempted to be intimidated by a race of red-coats, whoſe profeſſion is that of bearing arms againſt their fellow citizens.

It is the peculiar characteriſtic of deſpotiſm, that when calm and rational enquiry is ſet on foot on the ſubject of government, to refute it, not by reaſon and truth, but by chains, gibbets, and the cannon's mouth. Such arguments are certainly deciſive, and though they may not

perſuade, never fail to ſilence. Military force, however, will prove a bad engine of parliamentary power, when men ſhall ſincerely begin to effect a Reform of their Repreſentation; for if the people are united and determined, nothing can withſtand them. The energy of conſcious rectitude muſt prevail. The greater part of the ſoldiery too, connected by ties of relationſhip and amity to a part of their opponents, would deſert their cauſe. The only event, indeed, that could reſult from ſuch provocation, would be, that popular zeal, worked up to an exceſs of reſentment, would not be content with the firſt object of its intention, the correction of the errors of the eſtabliſhed ſyſtem of government; it would deſtroy that ſyſtem itſelf:—a circumſtance, which (as I think our mixed form of government is admirably calculated for the preſent mixture of paſſions in the character of the people) I ſhould much lament, even though a bright and glorious ſyſtem of political equity were to riſe like a Phœnix from the aſhes of the old Conſtitution; for political improvements are hazardous, where they are ſo bold and rapid as to outrun the progreſſive wiſdom of a people.

With regard to the queſtion of writings, it is certainly the avowed opinion of many ſenſible men, that the ſevereſt puniſhment ought to be inflicted on the authors of works decrying or condemning the eſtabliſhed form of Government.

To my mind, I confeſs, the fact appears far otherwiſe. Government involves too many concerns, it is productive of too great a degree of human happineſs or miſery, not to claim our ſtricteſt attention; and it is only by pointing out whatever the ſubject preſents of a defective appearance, that we can hope to remedy the moſt dangerous errors. It is, however, thought a liberal principle in our Legiſlators to aſſert, that the Preſs is a check on the conduct of men in power, and that writers are at liberty to attack the particular meaſures of Adminiſtration, or thoſe of their opponents; but that the Conſtitution itſelf ought, by all good citizens, to be deemed ſound and inviolable. What is this but to ſay, in other words, that "We, as contending parties, will enable the people to render the preſs an inſtrument in our hands, for waging war againſt each other, to ſerve our own political purpoſes; but we will on no account whatever, ſuffer them to ſcrutinize the ſyſtem by which we are ſanctioned in our plunder." The cant term *good Citizens*, we know to be always applied by politicians, to thoſe who are patient and quiet ſubjects of the Government, however oppreſſive, under which they live; but he alone is a truly good Citizen, who endeavours to render his fellow citizens happier; and as much of the miſery of life proceeds from the injuſtice of the eſtabliſhed forms of Government, and the annihilation of that injuſtice can only be obtained by unveiling it

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to popular inſpection, a good Citizen will be more likely than any other man, odd as the expreſſion may appear, to publiſh libels againſt the Conſtitution of his country. Moſt political Conſtitutions will happen to contain ſome degree of evil, either from the nature of their principles, the abuſe of their practice, or the change of the circumſtances and temper of the times: and it is only by the occaſional remedy of that evil, that ſuch Conſtitutions may be gradually advancing towards perfection; and He merits the title of a good Citizen, who freely diffuſes his ſentiments on the nature of that evil with a view to its expulſion, and to the improvement of the Conſtitution. If thoſe ſentiments be erroneous, they will be refuted; if juſt, their diſperſion will benefit mankind. Private libels may be truly ſaid to demand the ſevereſt puniſhment, becauſe the ſecurity of moral character is a great incentive among men to moral conduct, and the community cannot derive any advantage, ſufficient to juſtify the pain that has been given to the feelings of the individual, but on the diſcuſſion of all public ſubjects; as they affect the community at large, there ought to be no reſtriction whatever. We have a right to canvaſs the merits of all Conſtitutions which we pay taxes to ſupport: We have a right to enquire into the truth of all religions which are ſolemnly preſented to us as the diſpenſations from Heaven: And no Government is or can be free, which, inſtead of reſtraining, does not *invite* the

people

people to ſpeak and write their ſentiments on all ſuch ſubjects, without reſerve, without enmity, without fear. Diſcuſſions of this kind muſt end in the triumph of Truth, and however detrimental they may prove to the intereſts of particular individuals, they cannot but eventually promote the cauſe of general juſtice and general happineſs.

In ſtating the ſentiments contained in theſe letters, whatever *innovations* of cuſtomary forms I may ſeem to have propoſed, I truſt, that I have ſuggeſted no meaſures which militate againſt the genius and ſpirit of the Britiſh Conſtitution: and when I uſe this indefinite expreſſion (ſo often applied by our Legiſlators, as ſounds ſignifying nothing) I would be underſtood to mean, that I have ſuggeſted only ſuch plans as are analogous to the principles and forms eſtabliſhed by law, and peculiar to the political organization of the kingdom. I have expreſſed a wiſh that our *parties* in Parliament were broken up: I have urged the neceſſity of a Reform of the National Repreſentation in Parliament, and have given the outlines of ſuch principles as appear to me to be thoſe on which that reform ſhould be conducted. I have propoſed the idea of a Grand Reviſional Aſſembly, which, by periodical corrections of Parliamentary abuſes, will keep our political ſyſtem ſound and pure, till the lateſt period of its poſſible exiſtence, and will then ſafely conduct it

to

to any farther degree of excellence that may ſuit the circumſtances of the times, and the wiſhes, intereſts, and conviction of the whole country.

If the manner in which I have treated the principles of Monarchy and Ariſtocracy, while writing on the ſubject of French affairs, appear incompatible with what I have afterwards ſaid in their favour, in diſcuſſing the merits of the Engliſh Conſtitution; the inconſiſtency will be found more apparent than real, by thoſe who conſider, that in the firſt inſtance I took the opportunity to regard thoſe principles in an abſtract and philoſophical light; and that in the ſecond, I dwelt on the relative excellence reſulting from a happy adaptation of them to local incidents, and the manners of the people. Men of thought and obſervation do not want to be told, that circumſtances of expediency may give relative excellence to that which, in itſelf, is very remote from abſolute perfection.

On the ſubject of the firſt Revolution in France, I have expreſſed great exultation. When I ceaſe to exult in ſuch a cauſe, I do moſt ſincerely hope that I ſhall ceaſe to live! With reſpect to the ſecond Revolution, the praiſe that I have beſtowed, has certainly been qualified with ſome mixture of doubt and apprehenſion. After having aboliſhed the old deſpotiſm, and reared on its

its ruins, a Conſtitution, the moſt wiſe and virtuous that had ever been inſtituted by human reaſon and integrity. I dreaded the danger of overturning ſo equitable and beautiful a ſyſtem: With ſome remnant, perhaps, of that licentiouſneſs of manner which peculiarly diſtinguiſhed the national character under the old deſpotiſm, it was a bold experiment to venture on a Republic, which peculiarly requires integrity of morals for its ſupport, becauſe, from the moment in which the ſacred duties of life are conſidered with contempt, thoſe principles are ſet in action, which undermine the Republic, and profligate characters aim at arbitrary power for the purpoſe of gratifying their paſſions and their appetites. At the ſame time that I ſaw the ſubject in this light, I could not help entertaining ſome hopes that I might be miſtaken, that the French would cultivate manly morals ſuitable to ſo manly a form of government, and that their ſeveral efforts to throw off every ſyſtem of monarchial and ariſtocratical principles, would only prove ſo many generous ſteps towards reſcuing human nature from thoſe evils and miſeries which have been ſo fatally introduced among mankind by the arts of civil governments. I have freely indulged in theſe hopes and theſe fears, and how far either of them have been founded, time only can determine.

I will not defend all that has been lately done in France; but I think, that it is more juſt to attribute the ſanguinary acts that have diſgraced the nation, to the violent faction that has long ſince agitated Paris, than to the French People. Louis is no more! and for an execution ſo baſe and brutal, I am not anxious to retract the expreſſions which I applied in a former letter to the authors of ſuch an event, previous to its having happened. That event was evidently accelerated by the inflammatory arts of a deſperate faction, but for the conduct of the French people, who ſuffered themſelves to go along with the feelings of that faction, ſome allowance may be made, when we conſider how many children had loſt their parents, how many parents their children, in conſequence of wars carried on againſt France, of which Louis, however innocent, was the oſtenſible object. Let us likewiſe remember, the inſults which they received from powers profeſſing themſelves neutral; the menacing intimation of this court on the recall of our miniſter from Paris; and the foul language which had been heaped upon the whole nation by the Britiſh Parliament—and we ſhall the leſs wonder, that their exaſperated feelings, receiving an additional ſtimulus from ſuch ill-timed provocations, drove them to an act, which in their cooler moments, they could not have approved. To have ſuffered wrongs is a vile

pretext

pretext for committing them; and no injuries can juſtify the vices of a vindictive ſpirit. To clear diſpaſſionate reaſon, nothing can be more evident than the conduct which France *ought* to have adopted: but ſhe felt herſelf dared to the commiſſion of that act which we all deplore, as if it were a point of honour and of courage neceſſary to be aſſerted, and the violent party took advantage of her feelings to urge her to it; nor was it to be expected, that notwithſtanding all their apparent advances towards truth and virtue, the French people ſhould not yet have ſo far emerged from thoſe unhappy opinions, which are the chief ſources of the miſery of man, as to ſee that true honour is incompatible with injuſtice, and that the nobleſt act of human courage, is to dare to perſiſt in rectitude, in ſpite of the provocations and miſconceptions of all the world. If other nations had choſen to impute the ſafety of Louis to a fear of their own power, let thoſe nations have prided themſelves in that opinion; and if they had thought proper to ſay ſo, it had then been time for France to have drawn the ſword and convinced them of their error.

On the ſubject of affairs in France, however, it is hazardous at this moment to pretend to offer a decided opinion. Events occur too unexpectedly, not to baffle all conjecture as to their termination. Thus much, however, as to the

ſubject in general, I will frankly declare; that I think, as we are engaged in a war with that nation, every real Engliſhman muſt wiſh us to be ſpeedily extricated from that ſtate of hoſtility, with honour; and that, as the object of the other combined powers cannot but prove fatal to the cauſe of humanity throughout Europe, if ſucceſsfully purſued, every good and great mind muſt wiſh that *their* efforts may fail, and France be free. May her future conduct prove *worthy* of her early efforts, and may ſhe by no glaring injuſtice, by no violence of domeſtic factions, forfeit her claim to virtuous liberty! *May ſhe propagate her principles*,* not by the ſword, not by the inhuman exploits of military *heroes* (as they are called) but by proving their rectitude (for it *may* be done) in the cultivation of the arts of peace, the proſperity of their trade and commerce, and the promotion of concord and virtue among all her citizens! If it be ſaid, that in wiſhing well to the liberties of France, I wiſh ill to the glory of this country, ſince a neighbouring ſtate cannot be free but at our expence,

* When the Author uſes this expreſſion, which he knows to be peculiarly obnoxious, he alludes to the general principles of liberty, toleration and juſtice, which were aſſerted at the time of the French Revolution, and not thoſe principles on which many of the miſtaken zealots in the cauſe of liberty have too often acted. A Member of the Jacobins lately propoſed that the heads of thoſe who ſhould dare to avow the ſentiments of *moderatiſm* ſhould be made to roll in the duſt. Principles of ſo ſanguinary and deteſtable a nature, the writer deprecates and abhors.

I cor-

I cordially diſclaim ſo illiberal a policy. God never made this beautiful world, with a view that the glory of one country ſhould depend on the depreſſion of another. The true glory of every ſtate conſiſts, not in arrogantly lording it over its defenceleſs neighbours, but in the perfection of its own ſocial ſyſtem, and the ſolid advantages that it diffuſes among its people. Convinced of theſe opinions, I cannot heſitate to declare my wiſh, that France, riſing ſuperior to the fatal zeal of that faction of ſanguinary madmen from within, who would promote the cauſe of liberty by blood, and the deteſtable hoſtility of a knot of continental deſpots from without, may yet enjoy the bleſſings of a liberal government. The avarice and ambition of thoſe crowned heads who are combined againſt the cauſe of liberty, may induce them to believe, that the welfare of one ſtate conſiſts in the conqueſt and ſubjugation of another: but the idea is falſe: unjuſt dominion is extravagant to ſupport, and precarious in its tenure; and the only real political intereſt, not merely of this or that particular body of men, but of the whole ſpecies, depends on the freedom and happineſs of every country on the face of the globe.

Such, Sir, are my ſentiments on public ſubjects: ſentiments, which I have freely communicated, becauſe you did me the honour to requeſt them; and which I would as freely publiſh, becauſe I believe them to be true.

Conſcious

Conſcious of the integrity of the intentions by which they have been dictated, what could I have to fear from their avowal? On the preciſe ſubject of the Britiſh Conſtitution, I have written nothing hoſtile to the ſpirit and principles of that Conſtitution; and if the vigilance of informers, and the ingenuity of lawyers, could twiſt any paſſage of theſe letters to purpoſes of perſonal miſchief to myſelf, the fault would be their's, not mine. No injury, I truſt, that I might poſſibly ſuffer from the vices of men, which, I am perſuaded, ariſe for the moſt part from their errors, would ever render me diſguſted with my ſpecies, nor damp the ardour which I feel to direct the reaſonings of my mind, ſuch as they may be, to objects of public benefit. Proſecutions for doing that which is right, only prove that a man may ſuffer legal injuries for rectitude of conduct; and as it is our invariable duty to do that which is right, and that which is *right* in itſelf cannot be changed into *wrong* by perſonal conſequences, we ought to allow no fear of perſonal conſequences to deter us from our duty. In what I have written I have hazarded no principle which is not founded in public juſtice, and which I do not believe it to be the intereſt of ſociety to adopt; and the conſciouſneſs of this fact would ſufficiently arm me againſt the fear of any perſonal ill conſequences, were perſonal ill conſequences apparently to be expected

pected. It is in proportion as we cultivate these maxims, it is in proportion to our zeal in the exertion of our efforts for purposes of public good, equally despising the prejudices of the times, the intoxication of popularity, and the selfish narrow views of party, that we shall secure to our minds a pure and exalted degree of happiness, of which no external accidents can bereave us, that we shall become valuable citizens of the society to which we belong, and real friends to Man.

I am, dear Sir,

Your's, &c.

* * * *

THE END.

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